

Peninim On The Torah

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Parashat Vayigash

Now Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him...He cried out in a loud voice. (45:1,2)

We should strive to understand Yosef's sudden weeping. Here is an individual who had been suffering for twenty-two years. He was reviled by his brothers; thrown into a pit with poisonous snakes and scorpions; sold to the Midyanim, the Yishmaelim, and then to the Egyptians; a slave to Potiphar; and a prisoner in the Egyptian dungeon together with the dregs of society. Yet, during this entire time, we find no mention of his emotional release. Perhaps he did weep, but the Torah does not mention it. The only time the Torah mentions Yosef's emotional release is when he sees his brothers. What about being reunited with his brothers catalyzed Yosef's tears more than anything that had occurred in the past?

Horav Tuvia Lisitzin, zl, gleams from here the significance of brotherhood. Yosef could handle pain, suffering and deprivation. He could transcend adversity and triumph over challenge. The emotion that welled up within him, however, when he saw his brothers standing before him, when he saw the love they demonstrated towards Binyamin, was just too much. He could no longer contain himself, and he began to weep. Yosef could deal with pain, but the love that emanated from the relationship of brotherhood was something unique, something special. He just lost control.

Yosef saw the mesiras nefesh, dedication to the point of self-sacrifice, that his brothers manifested towards Binyamin. He noticed that Binyamin had given each one of his ten sons a name that alluded to his missing brother, Yosef. He saw the love, and love softens a person's emotions. It accomplishes what pain cannot achieve. A person can fight pain. He cannot fight love.

This relationship presents itself again during the Chanukah episode. The Chashmonaim were one family that was so close that the members banded together and fought as one unit against impossible odds. They were together in mind and soul, in commitment and purpose, in ideal and devotion to the Almighty. It was members of that same Levite family - the family of Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam - who stood at the helm of the Jewish nation as they left Egypt and who shared in the majesty and glory of the Revelation and the Giving of the Torah. Klal Yisrael is founded in and built upon brotherhood. After all, the Torah is based on the principle, "Love your fellow as yourself." It is all

about brotherhood.

One day, as a great famine surged through Russia, a beggar-- weak, emaciated and starved to death-- turned to a famous secular writer and asked for alms. The man searched his pockets to no avail. He was without as much as a penny. Taking the beggar's worn hands between his own he said, "Do not be angry with me, my brother, I have nothing on me." The thin, haggard face of the beggar began to shine, as from some inner light, as he whispered in reply, "But you referred to me as brother. That alone is a great gift."

But his heart rejected it, for he could not believe them. (45:26)

The news that Yosef was still alive should have excited Yaakov Avinu beyond imagination. The impact of the discovery that his long-lost son was still alive and well should have brought incredible joy to him, but it did not. In his heart, Yaakov had questions. How could he be certain that the viceroy of Egypt, who claimed to be his son Yosef, was really who he said he was? It was only after Yosef instructed his brothers to tell Yaakov that he still remembered the last topic which they had studied together-- the laws of Eglah Arufah, the calf whose neck is broken in penance for an unsolved murder-- that Yaakov believed that it was truly Yosef. Why was it so difficult for Yaakov to accept that Yosef was still alive? Did he not want to believe this? Why was he so negative? Apparently, this man seemed to know everything that Yosef had experienced prior to his sudden departure from home.

Horav Aizik Ausband, Shlita, explains that Yosef's knowledge of the circumstances leading up to his sale was not a clear indication that he was Yosef. He could be an imposter who knew Yosef and had culled from him the necessary information regarding his past. It was only when he presented the divrei Torah, a memory of the spiritual relationship that Yaakov had shared with his son that Yaakov knew it was Yosef who was relating this information. A crooked person does not concern himself with ruchniyus, spirituality. He would never think of seeking out this pertinent information, because it would be inconsequential to him.

Interestingly, a similar episode occurred concerning the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna. A young man disappeared shortly after his marriage. His young wife was relegated to the status of an agunah, abandoned wife, who was not permitted to remarry until there was clear proof of her husband's demise or until she received a divorce. One day, a man arrived in Vilna who claimed to be her long-lost husband. He even substantiated his claim by citing facts about the family. Everybody was inclined to believe him, except for the girl's father. Something did not sit right with him. While he was unable to disprove the man's claim, he was equally unable to dispute it. He went to the Gaon and presented his issues, asking for the sage's advice. The Gaon instructed him to question the man concerning his seat in the shul on the Shabbos of his aufruf, when he was called up to the Torah on the Shabbos preceding his wedding. When the man replied that he had no clue, his lie was exposed. The Gaon later explained that a crooked person asks for information about everything mundane that is pertinent, but he shies away from areas of spirituality. These are of no concern to him.

Perhaps we may suggest another point of view. The real Yosef would have sought to remember those areas that were important to his father. Yosef was acutely aware of the significance of Torah in his father's life. If he wanted to ingratiate himself to him, he would have to remember those instances about which he cared, those moments that were important to him. Relating family histories and stories would not impress Yaakov. His son would remember divrei Torah, because that is what he cared about most.

And Yisrael said, "How great! My son Yosef still lives!" (45:28)

We are so obsessed with ourselves and our needs that we tend to overlook and not appreciate the wonderful gifts we receive from Hashem. The Telzer Rav, Horav Yosef Leib Bloch, zl, would comment that "it is the pettiness of our generation and its accompanied imagined superiority that stand in the way of our appreciating the greatness of the previous generations." When the brothers returned to Yaakov Avinu and related to him that Yosef was still alive and that he was the viceroy of Egypt, citing the incredible honor and power that he had, Yaakov responded, "How great! My son Yosef still lives!" It seems as if Yaakov was not interested in listening to all of Yosef's glory. Why?

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twersky relates the following story. A woman was walking along the beach one day when a violent storm broke out. With no warning, a giant wave came and swept away her young son. The distraught, helpless mother cried out to Hashem, "Please give me back my child!" She screamed this over and over again. Shortly thereafter, another giant wave came along and deposited her son, unharmed, in front of her.

One cannot put into words the overwhelming gratitude this woman felt. At first, she could not speak. She just embraced and held her child. Then, regaining her composure, she looked up at Heaven and cried out, "Thank you! Thank you! Hashem, Your kindness overwhelms me. My gratitude to You is eternal. I can never thank You enough for my son's safe return." Suddenly, she took a good look at the child, then once again lifted her head Heavenward and, in a demanding tone, called out, "But Hashem, he was wearing a hat!"

We pay gratitude, but, at times, we do not even understand for what we must pay this gratitude. We worry about narishkeiten, foolish things, that have little substance and less value. Since we are so petty, they become big things in our minds. It is our pettiness that grants them significance.

Yaakov Avinu waited for twenty-two years for his son. Finally, when he heard the words, "Yosef is alive!" he was not concerned with Yosef's exalted position in Egypt. If Yosef was alive, everything else was superfluous.

It happens all of the time. We are the beneficiaries of profound favor from Hashem, and we pay our gratitude. Yet, we still remain dissatisfied, because as good as it is, we still would like it to be better. It is not as if we do not have - we just want more. We have the child back in our arms, but we still demand his hat.

There is a very meaningful secular proverb that reads: "I complained because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet." This powerful statement has much truth to it. There are so many things in life for which we should be thankful - but we take them for granted. It is only when they are beyond our reach that we become acutely aware of their significance. People do not feel the wonder, beauty and joy of life until it is almost taken away from them. It often takes a serious threat to our blessings to make us aware of them. How many of us complain about "no shoes," but forget to pay gratitude for our "feet"? We have become lost in a sea of complacency with no compass to guide us out. If we take the time to sit back and think about all the good fortune of which we are the beneficiaries, we would realize how much we owe Hashem. Once our "GPS" of life is focused in the right direction, the rest of the trip will have greater meaning and a more accurate orientation.

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef. (46:28)

Yaakov Avinu sent Yehudah to establish a makom Torah, a place from which Torah could be disseminated. If so, why did he send him to Yosef? Would Yehudah, upon arriving in Egypt to establish a yeshivah, approach anybody else other than Yosef? Certainly Yosef, being the man in charge, "our man in Egypt," would be the one most likely to give Yehudah the help he needed to complete his mission successfully. Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, suggests that an important lesson is to be derived herein. Yosef had told his brothers, "Tell my father of all my glory in Egypt and all that you saw." (ibid. 45:13) He was intimating that his entire day was occupied with managing the country and saving the lives of starving people throughout the world community. Many people say that saving the world is the greatest mitzvah of all and, thus, it absolves them from all other responsibilities, even that of studying and disseminating Torah. While there is no question concerning the significance of saving lives and toiling on behalf of the community in general, Torah remains paramount, and its study and dissemination are to be our most important goals in life. Absolutely nothing supersedes Torah.

This is why Yaakov sent Yehudah to Yosef. He was making it clear to Yosef that although he was busy and heavily involved in saving lives, he was still obligated to build yeshivos and spread Torah knowledge, as his forbears had done before him. Torah study takes precedence over everything else. Yosef was obliged to do better: save lives and protect and uphold the Torah.

Yosef sustained his father and his brothers...Thus, he provided them (the Egyptians) with bread for all their livestock during that year. (47:12,17)

Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, notes a difference between the word used to describe how Yosef provided for his family and the manner in which he sustained the Egyptian populace. When Yosef fed his father and family, the Torah refers to it as l'chalkeil, sustaining them. Yet, when he fed Egyptians, the word used is l'naheil, to manipulate, to lead, to manage. There is a powerful lesson to be derived from the variance in words. The Jew is stubborn and will not sell his Torah or himself for a piece of bread. Even in periods of famine, the Jew has maintained his superiority over the physical and has not sold himself for a piece of bread. Jewish children were kidnapped in Czarist Russia and forcibly conscripted into the army. Yet, they would rather die than abandon their faith. A hungry Jew can be "sustained," but not "manipulated."

The Egyptians were descendants of Eisav, who sold the birthright of the firstborn for a bowl of red lentil soup. Their forbear would have been proud of them as they sold their souls for a piece of bread. According to the Midrash, Yosef insisted that they circumcise themselves as part of his campaign to educate them morally. This was something new to the Egyptians, for what would an Egyptian not have done for a piece of bread?

Our ability to transcend physical needs in order to ascend to a higher goal in life has manifest itself throughout the millennia. This especially distinguished us during the dark years of the Holocaust. In a famous incident that took place following the war, Horav Eliezer Silver, zl, met a survivor who was very vocal in his abrogation of religious observance. "After what I saw in the concentration camp, I can no longer believe in G-d!" the man exclaimed bitterly. "What is it you saw that provoked such a

negative reaction?" Rav Silver asked him.

"There was a man in my block that had a pair of Tefillin, which he would lend to the other inmates in exchange for a small piece of bread. You should have seen the men lining up to put on Tefillin. How could a Jew take advantage of his brethren like that? Is that what G-d wants of us? If a Jew can do this all in the name of religion, then I want no part of it!"

"My friend," Rav Silver replied, "I am surprised that an intelligent man like you would focus on one Jew's unfortunate weakness. What about all those who gave up their bread just so that they could put on Tefillin? Why do you not look at the positive side of this encounter?"

Yes, there were those who could not handle the pain, the starvation and misery, and there were those who took advantage of their brothers' devotion to mitzvos. What about those, however, to whom matters of the spirit were on a more significant plane than their physical necessities? What about those to whom serving Hashem was the dominant factor in their life? What about the 2500 men in Auschwitz who were willing to starve, rather than to reveal the identity of a semi-starved inmate who had broken into the potato store and "stolen" a few potatoes? What about the young boy who gladly sustained a painful beating with a rubber truncheon because he had brought in a few Siddurim for his friends? What about all those Jews who risked their lives daily, so that they could perform mitzvos and maintain some semblance of religion and hope in a place whose objective was to destroy any nuance of belief?

The Jew has proven time and again that he will not sell himself, his dignity, his religion for a bowl of lentils. This is Yaakov Avinu's legacy to his children. The birthright, the ability to serve Hashem, takes precedence over everything. The nourishment of a piece of bread is short lived, while matters of the spirit endure forever.

Then he fell upon his brother Binyamin's neck and wept. (45:14)

Rashi explains that Yosef cried over the two Batei Mikdash that would stand in Binyamin's portion in Eretz Yisrael, which would be destroyed. We have no idea of the value of a Jewish tear - especially if it is shed for the destruction of our Sanctuaries. To emphasize this verity, Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that he once had to render a halachic decision concerning the will of an elderly Jewess who had singled out one of her grandchildren, a young woman, by bequeathing her ten thousand dollars. At the time, this was an exorbitant amount of money. What seemed to stun everyone was the fact that this one grandchild had received a single gift that by far exceeded the bequests of the other grandchildren. After awhile, and after much searching, they discovered a letter written by the elderly grandmother which explained her decision. It seems that during a family gathering, the grandmother had related to her grandchildren her experiences and the travail that she had endured during the terrible Holocaust years. While all of the grandchildren were moved by her life story, this one granddaughter began to weep. This display of emotion and sensitivity to her anguish moved the grandmother to the extent that she bestowed on her this extra gift.

If tears for human pain can have such an impact upon a human being, how much more so can tears which are shed for a lack of kavod Shomayim, for the glory of Heaven which has been diminished as a result of the destruction of the Sanctuaries and the ensuing exile, have an eternal effect in Heaven. Hashem saves every tear and values it greatly. One day, these tears will hasten our redemption.

He (Yosef) then kissed his brothers and wept upon them. (45:15)

Yosef seems to be a baal bechi, one who is often reduced to tears. In the previous parsha, we find a number of times in which he had been forced to leave the room, lest he begin to cry in front of his brothers. In this parsha, the revelation of his identity was accompanied by much weeping. This seems to continue on into Parshas Vayechi. What are we to learn from all this? Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, explains that one who is the victim of much anguish, whose companion in life is agony and persecution, whose burdens and troubles are overwhelming, weeps frequently even during his moments of peace, tranquility and harmony. This is because he is sensitive to -- and is pained by -- the troubles of others. On the other hand, the brothers, who did not sustain the burdens that were so integral to Yosef's life, did not cry even when tears were appropriate. They were just not forthcoming. Yosef was used to crying. Indeed, his concern and sentiment towards others are what catalyzed his rise to greatness.

Yosef was an individual who put another person's needs before his own. At least, he was sensitive to the needs of another person as if they were his own. The Torah teaches us that when Yaakov Avinu and Yosef were finally reunited, Yosef "appeared to him." Rashi explains that Yosef appeared to his father. Horav Leib Chasman, zl, explains that the meeting between father and son after all these years was truly an emotional one. Yaakov had waited for twenty-two years, mourning and weeping for his special son. Yosef's love was certainly reciprocal. He waited longingly to see his father before it would be too late. They each had an agenda. The Torah tells us that despite Yosef's compelling emotions, he deferred to his father and gave him the opportunity to view him and derive the maximum pleasure from the meeting. Yosef remained passive so that his father could experience the greatest enjoyment. He wanted his father to see him, so that he could fully enjoy what had eluded him for these past years.

It was not just Yosef who had this unique character trait. It seems that this was a family trait. Chazal tell us that Binyamin, Yosef's brother, had ten sons. Rashi explains that each son had a name that in some way alluded to his missing brother, Yosef. Interestingly, one of the sons was called Chuppim, a derivative of the word chuppah, marriage canopy. Binyamin gave his son a name that expressed his grief over Yosef not being able to participate in his chuppah. Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, derives from here that being unable to join in a brother's chuppah is a tragedy for which it is worth naming a son. What was the source of this incredible sensitivity for one another? It was their mother, Rachel Imeinu. She was concerned that her sister not be humiliated. Consequently, she assisted her sister in marrying the man whom she thought would become her husband. This selflessness and sensitivity were transmitted through her genes to her two sons. They had not seen each other for twenty-two years. Yet, when they met, their tears were not for themselves, but, rather, for the Batei Mikdash and the Mishkan that would be destroyed in their respective portions of Eretz Yisrael.

Indeed, this is the innate nature of man. In his preface to the Ketzos HaChoshen, the Kunteres HaSefeikos cites the Mahari Muskato, zl, who says that "if a human being could possibly ascend to Heaven and gaze at the Divine beauty and order of the Heavenly Hosts, he still would not be satisfied with this incredible revelation unless he could relate this wondrous sight to his friends." He adds that everyone wants to share the knowledge that he acquires with his friends. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz posits that this desire to share is not a negative trait, but an inherently positive aspect of the human psyche. One does not derive complete satisfaction unless he is able to share his newly-found wisdom

with his friend. How often do we learn a penetrating dvar Torah or develop a novel Torah thought and immediately seek to share it with someone?

This type of sensitivity for another Jew has been the hallmark of our gedolim, Torah leaders. The story is told that Horav Avraham Pam, zl, was once asked by a man for assistance in resolving his financial problems. He was in need of a large sum of money in order to return to his original financial position. Rav Pam listened sympathetically and then wrote the man a check. The man began to weep profusely, as he begged the Rosh Yeshiva to phone his talmidim, students, to ask them to contribute to his check. Rav Pam apologized, saying that he had just called upon them to aid in another matter, and he simply could not do it again.

The man accepted this reason and thanked Rav Pam for his help. A short time later, a talmid came in to speak with the Rosh Yeshiva and noticed that his rebbe was going through a roll of index cards and crying. "Rebbe, what is it about the index cards that is making the Rebbe cry?" he asked.

"I just sent a man away empty-handed, because I could not help him. He asked me to call my well-to-do talmidim and implore them to help him. I told him I could not do it. I just went through the index cards to see if maybe there was possibly someone I could ask, but, alas, there is no one."

"But why is the Rebbe crying?" the talmid asked again.

"I am crying because he was crying. How could I not cry, if another Jew is in pain?"

This is the type of love that Rav Pam had for every Jew. It was a love borne of a personality who was sensitive to the needs of his fellow Jews, of a character who was not satisfied unless he shared what he had with his fellow.

Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, tells the story of the Z'viler Rebbe, Horav Gedaliah Moshe Goldman, who was interred in a Siberian labor camp during World War II. It was a miserable, back-breaking experience, but at least the one solace was that it was not a Nazi extermination camp. One Shabbos, the commandant summoned both the Rebbe and another Jew, a frail, old man, to his office. "You are both free to go. All you have to do is sign these papers and go," he said.

Rav Gedaliah Moshe reached for the papers and stopped. How could he write on Shabbos?

True, it was a release, but could he desecrate the holy Shabbos? After all, as bad as it was, it was not life-threatening. He was young and strong. Even if he would be detained there for a few more years, he would survive.

"No, I am sorry, sir. While I appreciate your kind gesture, I cannot desecrate my Shabbos," the Rebbe replied.

"Are you insane?" the commandant screamed. "I am granting you freedom. How can you waste such an opportunity?"

"I understand and appreciate your kindness, but it is my day of rest. I may not write."

"If you do not sign, you will rot in this place," the commandant responded with disgust. He then pushed the papers to the old Jew and said, "Okay, now, you sign the release papers."

"I am afraid that I cannot sign either. The same law applies to me," the old man said.

"You two are both insane," the commandant said in disgust and retrieved the papers.

"Wait!" said Rav Gedaliah Moshe. "I will sign his papers. Let him go free."

"I do not understand. You just told me that you cannot write on Shabbos. Yet, you are willing to

sign his papers. Have you taken total leave of your senses? Why are his papers different from yours?"

"There is a major difference," the Rebbe explained. "I am young and strong. I can survive here. He, on the other hand, is old and weak. He will not make it. Therefore, if he is not prepared to sign, I will sign for him."

The commandant was so impressed by this act of selflessness that he allowed them both to leave without demanding their signatures.

The Rebbe demonstrated sensitivity at its zenith.

And they told him, saying, "Yosef is still alive"...then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived.

Targum Onkelos interprets the phrase, "then the spirit of their father Yaakov Avinu was revived," to mean that the Divine Spirit which had left Yaakov twenty-two years ago had returned. This is because Yaakov was in a state of depression due to mourning for his lost son, Yosef. Now that he had heard the wonderful news that he was still alive, the Divine Spirit could return to him. We wonder why Hashem did not reveal to Yaakov that Yosef was alive. We understand that until Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, there was a "prohibition" against divulging to Yaakov anything regarding Yosef's whereabouts. Now that Yosef had disclosed the truth about himself to his brothers, however, why did Yaakov have to wait until his sons returned to hear the wonderful news? It seems that Hashem specifically wanted the brothers to be the bearers of the news. Why?

The Ozrover Rebbe, zl, explains that since the brothers had caused Yaakov so much grief, it was necessary that they be the ones to engender the good feeling that Yosef's being alive would generate. This good feeling would increase Yaakov's love for his sons and affirm his relationship with them. Thus, the good news that they shared made up for the bad news they had conveyed twenty-two years earlier.

Perhaps we might add another reason. In order to perform teshuvah properly, one must be sensitive to the negative consequences of his sin. Only after one realizes the evil that he wrought, can he properly offer penance. When the brothers saw the incredible joy that overcame their father when he heard that Yosef was still alive, they were able to comprehend and sensitize themselves to the pain he had experienced as a result of Yosef's loss. Until they understood and felt the terrible pain that Yaakov had suffered, they could not perform the teshuvah necessary to expunge their sin. When they saw Yaakov's joy, they could ascertain his pain and repent accordingly.

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

Rashi cites the Midrash which interprets the word l'horos, which means to teach, implying that Yehudah was sent by Yaakov on a mission to establish a house of study. Hence, Yehudah was the first Rosh Yeshivah in Jewish history. He set the precedent and the standard for others to emulate. Why was he, as opposed to the other brothers, selected for this lofty mission? What qualities did he exhibit that rendered him more suitable than the others? Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, posits that it was Yehudah's ability to be moser nefesh, his devotion to the point of self-sacrifice, that earned him the role of Rosh Yeshivah. Yehudah was the brother who did not permit his brothers to leave Yosef in the pit, but rather insisted that they sell him. He was the one that put his security aside and stood up to Yosef, after he came forward, and offered himself as areiv, guarantor, for Binyamin. It was Yehudah who, after

discovering that the wagons which Pharaoh sent to fetch Yaakov had the name of an idol etched on them, burned the wagons. Yehudah seems to have had a reservoir of self-sacrifice.

In order to direct a yeshivah, actually, any Torah-oriented organization or institution, one must have within him the ability to be moser nefesh. He must have the fortitude to stand resolute in the face of the winds of change which seek to undermine and usurp Torah authority. He must know from whom he may accept contributions, and from whom these contributions will come with strings attached. Last, he must know when it is necessary to close the yeshivah to prevent incursion or strife from taking it down.

Rav Shternbuch relates that he heard that in the yeshivah in Krinick, Lithuania, which was under the guidance of Horav Zalman Sender Shapiro, zl, there was a talmid, student, who fell prey to the misguided philosophy of the Haskalah movement. Rav Zalman Sender wanted to eject this student from the yeshivah. Regrettably, this young man had rallied the support of a number of members of the student body, and it seemed that his popularity was spreading. The disease of Haskalah was mestastizing throughout the portals of the yeshivah. As a last resort, Rav Zalman Sender sent a telegram to Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, seeking his counsel. Rav Chaim immediately sent back a telegram that was comprised of three chilling words: "Close the yeshivah." Rav Zalman Sender immediately closed the yeshivah.

It is related that when Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, was about to open a Yeshivah, he approached his revered rebbe, the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna, and expounded passionately about his goals and objectives in making the yeshivah. He used great detail to explain the multi-faceted curriculum and the type of scholar it would produce. The Gaon listened, saying nothing. Rav Chaim understood this to be a negative response. He did not open the yeshivah. A few years went by, and Rav Chaim returned to the Gaon once again to seek his advice regarding his proposed yeshivah. This time, the Gaon said, "Certainly, open the yeshivah as soon as possible." Rav Chaim was taken aback, and he asked, "Rebbe, why is this time different than the previous time when I asked concerning opening a yeshivah?"

The Gaon replied, "One who makes a yeshivah may not harbor any personal vested interests. His sole purpose in opening the yeshivah is to disseminate Torah - nothing else. When I saw the passion and enthusiasm that you exhibited concerning opening the yeshivah, I was concerned lest you had an element of personal interest in seeing your dream achieve fruition. Thus, if circumstances ever demanded it, you would be reluctant to close the yeshivah. This time, when you came to me, your attitude was more nonchalant. This indicates that your goal is totally l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. If the need ever arose, you would be prepared to take the necessary action." Indeed, we know that the Netziv, zl, did close the Volozhiner Yeshivah when the only option of remaining open was to demand secular certification for the rebbeim and recognition and inclusion of secular studies in the yeshivah curriculum.

Regardless of the situation, we can see from here that Torah leadership demands resolution and total commitment. The individual who vacillates, or compromises his principles whenever he is confronted with a challenge, is a poor leader. One has only to peruse the history of the growth of Torah education in this country, in Eretz Yisrael and in pre-World War II Europe to realize the validity of this principle.

And he said to his brothers, "I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?" (45:3)

The incident of Yosef and his brothers is one of the most difficult chapters in Biblical history to comprehend. It is replete with lessons in human nature, images of commitment to Torah law, and reflections of the values endemic to ethical behavior. Let us attempt to shed some light on the episode in order to glean some of its lessons. The brothers seemed to be confident in their judgment against Yosef. They appeared self-righteous and sure of themselves. Their only concern was their lack of compassion for Yosef as he pleaded with them to spare him. They were distressed about Yosef, but what about their aged father, Yaakov? What about the pain and anguish that had been his constant companion during Yosef's absence? The Bais Halevi posits that this concern is intrinsic to Yosef's question, "Is my father still alive?" He was intimating to them that he could not fathom how his father could have survived the anguish of not knowing Yosef's whereabouts. They seemed concerned with their father's present pain, but where had their concern been in the past?

Let us examine this further. The brothers came to Egypt and were immediately confronted by the Viceroy of Egypt. True, it had been some time since they had last seen Yosef, but how could they not have discerned that this Viceroy was none other than their long-lost brother, Yosef? Furthermore, as the Midrash, cited by Rashi, relates, they told Yosef that they had entered Egypt through ten different gates; they indicated that they had been searching for their lost brother. Apparently, they suspected that somehow Yosef had arrived in Egypt, and they were looking for him. They thought he might have been sold as a slave and was currently still in that same position. When they stood before the Viceroy, why did they not notice some resemblance to Yosef? True, he now had a beard, but did the beard transform him so much that he had become unrecognizable?

The questions go on. One who peruses Chazal will discover that Yosef's behavior vis-?-vis his brothers is plagued with anomalies. From taking Shimon, to the order in which he seated his brothers, how could they not have realized that it was actually Yosef who was speaking to them? The signs were there. Why did they not read them?

Horav David Bliacher, zl, explains that the brothers clearly felt that they were guilty of a wrong - a lack of compassion for Yosef when he begged them to reverse their judgment. This was the only thing for which they felt any onus of guilt. Nothing else! They understood that teshuvah, repentance, was demanded of them, and thus, for twenty-two years they introspected daily. Never once did they feel any guilt for selling Yosef - only for their lack of compassion. For twenty-two years, they did not drink any wine, in order to maintain their clarity of thought to support their judgment concerning the sale of Yosef.

We wonder why, after their travail upon entering Egypt and the various indications that the Viceroy of Egypt was really Yosef, they did not wake up and question their previous rendering of judgment. They now had every reason to believe that they had erred. Why were they denying this reality?

Rav Dovid cites a pasuk in Devarim 1:16, "Listen among your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother," in which Moshe Rabbeinu admonishes the judges to listen to the adversaries and to understand their claims. Chazal add that a judge may not listen to one litigant unless the other litigant is also present to state his claim. The Maharal m'Prague explains that, by nature, once the judge hears one litigant, his mind is oriented towards that perspective. When the second one presents his rebuttal, he is implicitly challenging the judge to change his mind. Human nature is that one resorts to his first opinion. There is much truth to the dictum that one never has a second chance to make a first impression.

The brothers were no different. They had rendered judgment and felt secure that they had meted

out righteous justice. They believed in their actions. Hence, anything that occurred that might impugn the integrity of their judgment was - in their minds - inconsequential and meaningless. They were, to quote a Yiddish expression, farkoift, sold, on their opinion. They could stand in front of Yosef and not see him, because the man they had sold as a slave deserved to remain a slave, not become a ruler. This could not be Yosef. Nothing bothered them, except their lack of compassion. They were blameless for any suffering caused by their judgment. We learn from here the importance of taking great care before passing judgment on a person or a situation. Once the judgment is issued, it is often irreversible.

And he (Yosef) fell on his brother Binyamin's neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck. (45:14)

The Midrash comments that Yosef and Binyamin wept over the destruction of the various Sanctuaries that would be built in their respective portions in Eretz Yisrael. We must endeavor to understand why, at this moment of heightened joy, they cried over the destructions that would occur in the future. Furthermore, why did each cry for the other one's destruction? What about his own destruction?

The Batei Mikdash were destroyed as a result of unwarranted hatred among brothers. This breach in Jewish society was a demanding accuser against the Jewish People. When Yosef and Binyamin met, they immediately sensed that the breach in their own family catalyzed Yosef's separation from Binyamin and his other brothers. This reality caused them to think of the future churban, destruction, that would affect their descendants. This awareness brought them both to bitter weeping.

The effect of sinaas chinam, unwarranted hatred, is rectified through an increase of brotherly love, to the point that one feels his friend's pain even more than his own. Therefore, each brother wept for his respective brother's destruction. Moreover, even though the Mikdash in Binyamin's territory would not be built until after the Mishkan in Yosef's territory was destroyed, Binyamin nevertheless wept for Yosef's churban, destruction. He would rather that it be his Mikdash if that would prevent the destruction of his brother's Mishkan. This represents the zenith of love and sensitivity between brothers.

Thinking of others even before they thought of themselves was the hallmark of our gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders. They distinguished themselves in the sensitivity they demonstrated to their fellow man, despite the apparent hardship it caused them. Rabbi Yechiel Spero has a number of stories in his Touched by a Story 2 which relate this virtue. I have selected two which are especially poignant to emphasize this character trait.

The Piaseczner Rebbe, zl, was a human being of unique character. A man of great personal strength, he exemplified faith, courage and self-sacrifice under the most trying conditions. As mentor to many during the war years in the Warsaw Ghetto, he inspired his chasidim with hope and optimism, amid grief and anguish. He suffered personal losses that were devastating. Yet, his faith was unswerving until the very last moment when he himself was led to his death.

It was shortly after Yom Kippur, and the relentless shelling was bombarding the ghetto on a regular basis. The Rebbe's daughter and son-in-law had been running for shelter when the building in which they had been hiding collapsed on them. They did not die immediately, but wavered between life and death for a few days, until the first day of Succos when their pure souls ascended to Heaven. The Rebbe heard the tragic news shortly before he was to lead his chasidim in the Yom Tov davening. His

reaction was characteristic of his enormous inner strength. He sang the traditional cheerful melodies that were so much a part of the Yom Tov ritual. When he came to Hallel, he turned to the congregation and sang Min Ha'meitzar, "From the depths I call to You, Hashem. Please answer me with expansiveness, Hashem. Hashem is with me, I have no fear, because what can man do to me?" These words of David Hamelech aptly described the Rebbe's essence. He embraced Hashem at all times.

The war years destroyed people's ethics and mentchlichkeit, as well as their lives. Honorable, decent human beings were suddenly transformed into morally deficient felons. A lamentable incident occurred that demonstrated this situation. A hapless person, who had fallen to the nadir of depravity, was caught rifling through the clothes of the Rebbe's recently deceased children. While this was a depraved and corrupt act, we must understand that this person had already probably lost everything - money, family and friends. His sense of self-respect had long ago been destroyed by the Nazi beasts. The Gestapo handcuffed him and hauled him down to the jail, declaring that he was enroute to the gallows.

The Rebbe was notified of this tragedy as he was about to begin the funeral for his beloved children. His reaction was typical: He turned around and, with a fiery passion in his eyes, ran from the funeral, declaring, "We must immediately go and save this man from the Nazis. We may not allow another Jew to fall prey to the Nazis."

"But, Rebbe, it is dangerous to go into the lion's den." The Gestapo headquarters was one place the Rebbe should not visit. His own life would be in peril. The Rebbe would not hear anything negative. A Jew's life was in danger; he had to attempt to save him. The Rebbe suspended the funeral and proceeded to the jail. He risked his life to save another Jew - the same Jew who had previously shown little respect for the dead. Several hours later, the Rebbe returned to bury his children, after having saved the life of a Jew. Sensitivity towards another person knows no bounds.

In the next story, we note how a Torah giant, during his own moment of grief, demonstrated incredible sensitivity for the dignity of another Jew. After the funeral of Horav Moshe Shisgal, zl, his father-in-law, the venerable Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, proceeded to another funeral that was taking place on the other side of the cemetery instead of walking towards the exit. When he was directed towards the exit, Rav Moshe simply nodded that he was aware of the direction of the exit; he had to attend another funeral. Where the gadol ha'dor, preeminent Torah leader of the generation, goes, the public follows. Suddenly, the gadol ha'dor and an overflow crowd were in attendance at a small funeral at the other end of the cemetery.

Rav Moshe seemed pleased with the attendance at the funeral, remarking to those close by, "This other man who passed away was a member of the same community as my son-in-law. As a result of the conflicting times, he probably had a much smaller funeral than expected. Why should he be at a disadvantage simply because his funeral took place on the same day as that of my son-in-law? If I attend his funeral, all those who are with me will follow suit. Thus, he will be accorded the tribute he deserves."

This is but one more vignette about an individual who distinguished himself, not only in Torah knowledge, but also in Torah ethics.

And he (Yosef) went up to meet Yisrael, his father, to Goshen... and he fell upon his neck and wept on his neck continuously. (46:29)

Rashi adds that Yaakov Avinu did not reciprocate by falling on Yosef's neck and crying, since he was reciting the Shema. This statement begs elucidation. Surely, if it was time for the mitzvah, Yosef should also have been reciting the Shema. In his commentary to the Torah, Gur Aryeh, the Maharal explains that when Yaakov saw his beloved son Yosef, serving as Viceroy over Egypt, his heart filled with love and fear of Hashem, as he understood how everything He does is designed to reward those who fear Him. Everything that had transpired during the past years, the various trials and travails, suddenly all fit into place, catalyzing a wonderful ending to the story of the missing Yosef. The pious devotees of Hashem have a practice that when they are the recipients of Hashem's favor, they cleave to Him and thank Him for all the good that He has done for them. This is represented by reciting the Shema, which emphasizes the unity of the kingdom of Heaven, as well as the love we must manifest for it. It was appropriate for Yaakov to recite Shema when he saw Yosef, after all of the anguish the he sustained as a result of the loss of his son. Now that he saw him in his glory as ruler over Egypt, he loved Hashem for what He had done for him. He, therefore, accepted His kingship and His love and His fear upon himself. Although it was not zman Krias Shema, time for reciting the Krias Shema, Yaakov demonstrated a spontaneous gesture of love for Hashem which was relevant to his current circumstances.

In an alternative approach, the Shem Mi'Shmuel suggests that Yaakov had another reason for reciting the Shema - a reason that was applicable only to him and not to Yosef. Yaakov Avinu's descent to Egypt marked the beginning of a dark period in Jewish history: the Egyptian exile. The Ramban underscores this fact when he writes that Yaakov perceived that the galus, exile, about to begin for him and his descendants. He was frightened and, therefore, offered sacrifices to the G-d of his father, Yitzchak, so that the attribute of Din, Strict Justice, would not be stretched out before him.

Yaakov Avinu was acutely aware that his descendants could not withstand the effects of middas ha'Din. At the moment of entry to Egypt, he took steps to ameliorate the strict Din. This was achieved through his reciting of the Shema, a prayer which declares the individual's acceptance of the unity of G-d and states his love for Him. Thus, Yaakov was able to reach beyond the Din to invoke Hashem's mercy for his descendants.

There is a powerful lesson to be derived from here. The beginning of any activity or endeavor is critical. Indeed, the success of the entire campaign depends on the quality of its inception. Yaakov sought to ensure that the Egyptian exile commenced with a declaration of faith in the unity of G-d and in Yaakov's love for Him. This would guarantee that it would be a dominant theme throughout the entire exile. This would, hopefully, engender the idea that throughout Klal Yisrael's travails in Egypt, their primary experience would be one of Divine mercy triumphing over strict justice.

In this instance Yosef was different from Yaakov. While Yosef surely was overjoyed to reunite with his father, undoubtedly his feelings of love and gratitude were also directed Heavenward. There was, however, one primary difference: Yosef was already in exile. He had lived in Egypt for quite some time, and, as such, he was not commencing a new experience, as his father was. Therefore, reciting Shema would not have fulfilled the same function for Yosef as it would have for Yaakov. Yosef wept upon his father, while Yaakov remained aloof, reciting Krias Shema and connecting with the Divine.

And Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef" ...But his brothers could not answer him. (45:3)

The episode of Yosef and his brothers finally reached its conclusion when Yosef revealed his identity with the words, "I am Yosef." Everything that had occurred during the past twenty-two years the ambiguities and paradoxes, the strange, unexplained, unreasonable happenings suddenly all had rationale and meaning. It had all come together. Yosef was truly a Navi, prophet, whose dreams were spiritual visions foreshadowing the future, not mere images of grandeur.

There is an important lesson to be derived from this twenty-two year incident. Nothing stands in the path of the Divine. Hashem has a plan, and it will reach fruition at its designated time. It was Hashem's will that Yosef become the viceroy of Egypt and that his father and brothers come down to Egypt and bow down to him. It happened - regardless of the brothers' machinations to thwart the plan. Not only did it materialize, but the brothers themselves provided the medium by which it became a reality.

Shlomo Hamelech says in Mishlei (21:30), "There is neither wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against Hashem." Ralbag cites the episode of Yosef and his brothers as a paradigm of this idea. We conjure up ideas and prepare all kinds of plans, to no avail. Against Hashem's plan, our schemes are meaningless.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, suggests that this concept has many practical applications. He cites one that is truly meaningful. An elderly parent becomes seriously ill. The children consult with a specialist to determine which course of treatment would be most beneficial. Two options are presented, each with its own risk and benefit potential. The family deliberates and makes a decision to follow one of the two approaches. Regrettably, the treatment fails, and the parent dies. The family is now besieged with guilt. They blame themselves for choosing the wrong treatment, the wrong doctor, the wrong hospital. They begin to blame one another, imposing the onus of guilt on anyone but themselves.

This scenario is not unusual. In fact, it is common. What we fail to realize is that the doctor, the hospital, the therapy - nothing - would have made a difference, because it was not part of Hashem's plan. The family should do whatever is in line with their best understanding of the situation, with the awareness that ultimately - if it does not coincide with Hashem's plan - it will not succeed.

Throughout the millennia, more than one wicked enemy has arisen to wipe us off the face of the earth. We are here today because it is part of Hashem's plan. It is a principle of our faith that this Divine protection will endure until the advent of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

Then he fell upon his brother Binyamin's neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck. (45:14)

Rashi explains that the two brothers wept over the future destructions of the Bais Hamikdash, which was to be situated on their portion in Eretz Yisrael. The two Batei Mikdash were to be built in Binyamin's territory, and the Mishkon Shiloh was to be erected in the territory of Yosef's son, Efraim. This commentary is enigmatic. In the very next pasuk, Yosef kisses his other brothers and also cries over them. Why does Rashi not explain over here that Yosef also cried over the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash? If the weeping was for the future, what does the crying over his brothers represent?

The Piazesner Rebbe, zl, cites the Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 28a that says, Mitzvos laav l'hen'os nitnu, "Commandments were not given to provide enjoyment." They were given to us as a yoke around our necks. The mitzvos engender a sense of discipline. This explains why the brothers cried on each other's neck. They each were lamenting the yoke of the mitzvos that would be shrugged off at the time of the

destruction of the Holy Temple.

Each and every Jew has a yoke around his neck - mitzvos. He has responsibilities and obligations that he has to perform and fulfill as a Jew. Moreover, his thoughts and his speech must be holy. Even when he is physically prevented from carrying out the mitzvos, he must brace himself and remember that he has a yoke, a pending obligation to fulfill the Divine mandate. In periods of catastrophe, when calamity and tragedy are a way of life, when suffering and pain overwhelm, and everything holy and Jewish is destroyed, people do not simply revoke their responsibilities due to the difficulty of observing the commandments. They even shrug off the yoke in response to all of the pain and degradation that they endure. Yosef and Binyamin cried, each on the neck of the other, because they lamented shrugging off the yoke of mitzvos which was a result of the destruction of the Batei Mikdash. Yosef did not fall on his brothers' necks; he merely cried over them.

With this idea in mind, the Piazesner explains another anomaly. In the subsequent text, the Torah relates that when Yosef met his father, Yaakov Avinu, he fell upon his father's neck and cried, whereas Yaakov did not fall on Yosef's neck. Rashi explains that Yaakov, instead of falling upon Yosef's neck, was reciting Krias Shma. The famous questions echoed by all the commentators are: Why did Yaakov choose that particular moment to recite Krias Shma? And why did Yosef not also recite Krias Shma?

Considering that which has been suggested above, we can now understand the text. When Yosef met his father, he once again became cognizant of the spiritual calamity that would befall Klal Yisrael with the destruction of the Temple. He once again wept over the future shedding of the yoke of mitzvos associated with the catastrophe. This is the reason that the Torah refers to Yosef's weeping on his father's neck. The Jewish people were now entering the Egyptian galus, exile. Yosef wondered how, under these circumstances, they would be able to maintain the yoke of mitzvos around their necks.

Yaakov responded by reciting the Shma, the symbol of self-sacrifice. With mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, we will endure the trials and tribulations, the pain and persecution, that has so much been a part of our long exile. When we recite Shma Yisrael, we return our souls back to Hashem, unconditionally and without reservation. The Shma recited in the morning sets the tone for the entire day. No one suggested that the exile would be easy, but, with mesiras nefesh, we can and will triumph over the many challenges that arise.

When we think of mesiras nefesh for mitzvah observance, when we associate total dedication to mitzvah performance during the most difficult moments in Jewish history, we think of those who served Hashem during the most devastating and painful period of our history - the Holocaust years. One individual whose mesiras nefesh for mitzvos comes to the fore is the Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, who was the paradigm of total dedication to mitzvah observance - regardless of the danger and pain inflicted upon him. His devotion went beyond mitzvah observance. Indeed, any custom or tradition had to be maintained in the ghetto under the most trying conditions. This was Yiddishkeit - it could never be forgotten!

One incident that stands out among the many is the Rebbe's devotion to observing the Festival of Shemini Atzeres. This day, when Hashem communes exclusively with the Jewish People, is the crowning jewel of all the Festivals. It is the climax of the Yamim Noraim, High Holy Days, the zenith of the festival of Succos. It is the day when Hashem says to the Jewish People, "Come, let us celebrate together."

Although the Rebbe was a prisoner and, therefore, subject to the work detail, the camp doctor, Dr. Greenbaum, a Jew by birth, had agreed to grant the Rebbe an exemption, so that he could rest. In

this way, the Rebbe did not have to work on Succos. Shemini Atzeres would be no different.

The Nazi oberfuerher, senior commander, had different plans. He decided to visit the camp together with Dr. Plukan, an evil woman, who was infamous for her selections, in which she would "weed out" the sick and infirm, immediately sending them to the crematorium in Dachau. Anyone missing at roll call was immediately sentenced to death. Word spread throughout the camp, and everyone immediately became concerned for the welfare of the Rebbe. Dr. Greenbaum was asked to change the Rebbe's dispensation. He would have to report for work, after all.

The Rebbe, however, had other plans. "Regardless of what happens to me, I will not work on Shemini Atzeres," he firmly declared. He remained in the barracks and celebrated Shemini Atzeres in the spirit of the day, with Torah and Tefillah. The prisoners were counted, and it became apparent that one prisoner was missing. Guards were immediately dispatched to the barracks to see who the missing person was. They found the Rebbe standing in the barracks immersed in prayer, oblivious to anything going on around him. The guards proceeded to handcuff the Rebbe and drag him to the lineup. Then two guards beat him mercilessly in front of the prisoners. They first beat him with truncheons, and then they kicked him fiercely with their metal-tipped boots. The Rebbe just lay in a pool of his own blood, hardly breathing, barely alive. A few broken prisoners picked up their beloved Rebbe and took him to the camp infirmary for immediate medical attention.

The prisoners who witnessed the beating were distraught, certain that the Rebbe would not survive. When they returned at night, they were shocked to see that not only had the Rebbe survived, but he was back in his barracks. He was limping around a small stool, which served as a makeshift Bimah, holding onto a few pages from a torn Mishnayos in his hand. This was the Rebbe's Hakofos in honor of Simchas Torah! The sheer joy that illuminated the Rebbe's bruised face seemed to light up the room. This man epitomized a form of mesiras nefesh that our enemies could not destroy. This is specifically why we have endured and triumphed over every one of them.

He sent Yehudah before him to Yosef, to instruct ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

Rashi explains that l'horos lefanav, to instruct ahead of him, is to be understood as Targum Onkelos renders it, "to clear a place for him and to instruct how he will settle in it." In other words, Yehudah was sent to prepare housing for the family. In an alternative explanation, Rashi cites Chazal who say that Yehudah was sent to establish a house of study from which instruction would go forth. There are two meaningful reasons for sending Yehudah ahead of the family. It is especially noteworthy that Yaakov Avinu did not want to, even momentarily, be without his beloved bais hamedrash. Thus, he sent Yehudah ahead to pave the way. What would have been wrong if he had spent a few weeks in Yosef's palace? Yosef had already demonstrated and confirmed his righteousness. Would it have been inappropriate if Yaakov had "moved in" for a few weeks until permanent housing was made available? What lesson does this convey to future generations?

Horav Yosef Zundel Salant, zl, suggests a powerful answer that teaches us an important principle. Yaakov was aware that while Yosef had maintained his piety and virtue, he was still the viceroy of Egypt. As such, he was compelled to exhibit a lifestyle that was not necessarily similar to one to which Yaakov would ascribe. As a government figure, the language spoken in his home was the native tongue, Egyptian. The palace, far from austere, was probably filled with portraits and figures that depicted Egyptian culture. In other words, the lifestyle of Yosef's home did not reflect an

atmosphere to which the Patriarch would want his family exposed. Yaakov, therefore, sent Yehudah to establish for him and his family a Jewish home, the type of home they were used to - back home.

We must add that, regardless of the outer trappings of Yosef's palace, it was still the home of Yosef Hatzaddik, the righteous, saintly Yosef, who had triumphed over religious adversity and the blandishments of the yetzer hora, evil-inclination. Since his position in the Egyptian hierarchy demanded it, however, he had to present a home that in some way conformed to Egyptian culture. What an important lesson for us to make sure that the morals of contemporary society do not permeate our homes through the various conveyances of the media. While we choose to live here - and without a doubt, America is a wonderful country to whom we as Jews owe very much - we do not have to bring its societal pollution into our dining rooms.

He sent Yehudah before him to Yosef, to instruct ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

In one explanation, Rashi cites the Midrash that says that Yehudah was sent to establish the first yeshivah in Egypt. Yaakov was not going down to Egypt until he was assured that there was a makom Torah, place set aside for Torah study, for his family. Why was Yehudah selected for this position? He was the king of the brothers. Yissachar was the Rosh Hayeshivah. He was the yeshivah man designate. Moreover, Levi, the individual to whom the transmission of our spiritual heritage was bequeathed, was also not asked to go establish the first yeshivah. Why was Yehudah asked as opposed to Yissachar or Levi? The Tiferes Shlomo explains that earlier Yehudah had exhibited a character trait that is necessary for successfully preparing the next generation. To build a yeshivah, to maintain its function, to be a Rosh Hayeshivah and establish talmidim, students, that will continue as students, one must possess this trait. When Yaakov Avinu was reluctant to send Binyamin to Egypt for fear something would happen to him, Yehudah stepped forward and assumed responsibility. He said, "I will personally guarantee him" (Bereishis 43:9). To establish talmidim, to maintain a yeshivah, one must have a sense of achrayos, take responsibility.

When it comes to educating our children, we must assume responsibility. We cannot pass it off to someone else, claiming that we are too busy, too involved, too preoccupied. The greatest roshei yeshivah would first spend time studying with their own children, fulfilling their personal obligation as parents, before going out to teach others. They were parents first and rebbeim second. How often are we too busy for our own children? We have shiurim to attend, chavrusos to study with - everything, but attending to our own children. The time we spend with our children engaged in Torah study is something that they will always remember.

Regrettably, some of us think that even playing a game with our children is too demanding. While he was in Bucharest, Romania, the Skverer Rebbe, zl, was the individual thousands came to for solace and encouragement following the devastation of the Holocaust. Yet, he found time to play with his daughters. He was acutely aware of the moral degradation of the "street." He could not expose them to the counter-culture of the gentiles. If they were to stay, they had to have someone with whom to play. He was that someone. This great tzaddik, who founded one of the most incredible communities in this country, who was father figure and mentor to thousands of chassidim, found time to play with his daughters. He knew what his responsibilities were, and he did not look for an excuse to renege from them. This was the root of his success.

It will happen when he sees the youth missing he will die. (44:31)

An elderly chassid, a follower of Horav Menachem Mendel, zl, m'Kotzk, came to the Kotzker complaining about his current financial straits. What disturbed him most was the fact that his grown children, whom he had supported with great mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, manifest no gratitude. They were all quite capable of helping him in his moment of need. Yet, they completely ignored his financial circumstances. At a period in his life when he should have been retired and relaxing, he was compelled to work hard to support himself.

The Rebbe listened intently to the chassid. After he finished his diatribe, the Rebbe said, "You should not be shocked by your children's behavior. It is not something new. In fact, a similar situation reigned in the home of Yaakov Avinu. This can be inferred from Yehudah's dialogue with Yosef concerning the release of Binyamin. Among his entreaties, Yehudah argued, 'it will happen when he sees the youth is missing, he will die.' Yehudah implored Yosef to take pity on Binyamin's aged father, who had suffered so much in his life. To sustain the loss of Binyamin would surely kill him."

"When we read this account, we are immediately confronted with a glaring question. While it is true that Yaakov would suffer greatly, what about Binyamin's ten sons, who would now be bereft of their father? Why does Yosef not have compassion on Binyamin's children, who would probably suffer irreparable emotional and physical damage with the loss of their father?"

"This teaches us," submitted the Kotzker with his head bowed down, "that parents feel their child's hurt -- and sense their child's pain -- much more intensely than children feel for their parents."

Horav Meir Yechiel zl, m'Ostrovze gives the following rationale for this phenomenon. All the generations since Creation follow in a chain from the earliest generations to the present. The various attributes, personality and character traits are transmitted from father to son and on. In other words, everything comes to us from Adam HaRishon, who bequeathed it to his offspring. This idea applies only to what has been transmitted from father to son. In regard to a son's compassion and sensitivity toward a parent, there is no precedent, because Adam HaRishon had no parents.

He [Yosef] cried in a loud voice. (45:2)

Chazal view Yosef's weeping as a portent for his descendants. They say, "Just as Yosef appeased his brothers only through weeping, so, too, Hakodesh Boruch Hu will redeem Klal Yisrael from its exile only through [their] weeping." As it is written in Yirmiyahu 31:8, "For with weeping they will come; with supplications I will bring them." Chazal's words are enigmatic.

If Hashem is waiting for tears, then our exile should have ended long ago. Have we not cried bitterly for thousands of years? Why did Hashem not respond to the tears of our ancestors and redeem them?

Horav Mordechai HaKohen explains that it is not merely the tears themselves that strike a chord.

Rather, the reason for the tears distinguishes tears of redemption from the tears of pain. Why type of tears flowed from Yosef? What catalyzed Yosef's weeping? Yehudah said, "For how can I go up

to my father if the youth is not with me, lest I see the evil that will befall my father (44:34)." Immediately thereafter, the Torah writes that Yosef could no longer restrain himself. What was there about Yehudah's statement that evoked such an emotional upheaval within Yosef to the point that he immediately began to cry uncontrollably?

When Yosef heard sensitivity and compassion emanating from Yehudah, when he heard that the brothers were prepared to risk their lives for the welfare of Binyamin, he realized that it was wrong for him to continue to distress them. He felt within himself boundless love for his brothers, and he began to cry for their pain. Yes, when he saw that they were concerned for Binyamin, he cried for the suffering he had caused them. This explains the uniqueness of Yosef's tears. He did not weep for his pain; he wept for his brothers' pain.

This is what Hashem is waiting for. As Yosef wept for his brothers' pain, so, too, is Hashem waiting for the tears that we cry for our brothers' pain. It is one thing to cry for one's own travail. It is altogether another thing, however, when one cries for the pain sustained by his friend. Hashem is waiting for our tears for Klal Yisrael's anguish.

Then Yisrael journeyed forth with all that he had...and (he) offered sacrifices onto the G-d of his father Yitzchak. (46:1)

Yaakov Avinu arrived in Be'er Sheva, a city glorified by the memory of his fathers. There he offered zevachim, sacrifices. He was in the happiest frame of mind that he had attained in his entire life. It was here at this zenith in his life, with his troubles and struggles behind him, that he felt capable of offering a Korban Shelamim, Peace-Offering. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, notes that this is the first time that any of the Avos, Patriarchs, offered a korban other than a Korban Olah, Burnt-Offering. He explains that a Korban Olah expresses complete submission to Hashem. The Korban Shelamim/Zevach is in itself a family meal to be eaten by the baalim, owners. Thus, it consecrates the "family house," making it into a sanctuary and rendering the "family table" a veritable altar. A zevach denotes the concept of "Hashem comes to us." It is understood from that happy consciousness that in a place where the family unit lives in harmony and joy, with fidelity to the Almighty, sensing the Presence of Hashem in their midst, His Presence permeates that family circle.

Rav Hirsch adds that for this very reason, the Korban Shelamim is by its very nature a "Jewish" sacrifice. Peace-Offerings of family life, expressing the awareness of G-d's blessing in their circle are quintessentially Jewish. While it is true that the idea of being absorbed in G-d and devoted to G-d is also found in non-Jewish spirituality, it does not penetrate every aspect of life, as it does in Jewish theology. The essence of Judaism is represented in the idea that one's ordinary day-by-day lifestyle can be elevated and sanctified: that our table becomes an altar; our home a sanctuary; our children dedicated servants to Hashem; and every aspect of our daily routine a spiritual endeavor. One can either view the mundane as bitul ha'yeish, negatively nullifying everything that is not wholly spiritual; or he can fulfill kiddush ha'yeish, consecrating the mundane by transforming it in a spiritual and holy activity.

Yaakov brought a zevach because he finally felt joy; he felt himself complete in his family circle. The Patriarchs that preceded him, Avraham and Yitzchak, regrettably did not enjoy such "completion" in their family unit. Avraham had Yishmael; Yitzchak had Eisav. Thus, they were compelled to veer toward a complete break with this world. They could not offer a Shelamim. Their

korban was an Olah, representing their commitment to negating olam hazeh. There was no room in their weltenshauung for the mundane. Yaakov was also hesitant in offering a Shelamim. He was not sure what would happen concerning Yosef. His travail did not allow for a Shelamim. As he was going down to Egypt to meet his long lost son, a son who had maintained his spiritual virtue throughout his terrible ordeal, he was able to offer the sacrifice that had eluded his forebears.

*Then Yisrael said to Yosef, "Now I can die, after my having seen your face, because you are still alive."
(46:30)*

So ends the saga of Yosef's "disappearance" from home. After many years of bitter longing, Yaakov Avinu was finally able to once again embrace his son. We read about it, but unless one has undergone the travail of almost losing a child and then finding him alive and well, it is difficult to fully grasp the overwhelming joy that both Yaakov and Yosef experienced. Baruch Hashem, this experience is something that is a rarity. There was a time, not so long ago, during World War II, when families were separated, when children were torn away from their parents, when siblings were severed from one another, when the Jewish People as a family unit became something of the past. It took years after the war until news of loved ones became unraveled and after much searching, some remnants of families were reunited. There were also those cases where clearly it was Hashgacha Pratis, Divine Providence, that steered events and people to reunite with one another. The following is one such moving story:

Young Private Goldberg was a soldier in the U.S. Army as it marched through war-torn Europe at the end of World War II. His unit was assigned to a European village, with orders to secure the town, search for any concealed Nazis, and assist the villagers in any way they could.

One night, Private Goldberg was on patrol when he saw a figure darting through a field just outside the village. "Halt or I will shoot!" he exclaimed. The figure ducked behind a tree and hid. Goldberg saw this and patiently waited. Eventually, the figure came out and began digging. Goldberg waited until the figure had completed his digging and once again shouted, "Halt or I will shoot!" The figure ran. Goldberg decided not to shoot. Instead, he gave pursuit. After a few minutes, he succeeded in tackling the figure to the ground.

To his surprise, he discovered that he had caught a young boy. During the scuffle, an ornate menorah fell from the boy's hands. Goldberg lifted up the menorah and stared. "Give me back my menorah!" cried the boy. "It is mine," he pleaded. "Do not worry," responded Goldberg. "I am also Jewish, I will help you."

Regrettably, the boy had been the victim of several years of the infamous ghettos and concentration camps of the Holocaust, so he was mistrustful of anyone in uniform. He had been forced to watch the execution of his father. He had no idea what had become of his mother. He was all alone in the world, with nothing but his little menorah.

The Jewish people are rachmanim bnei rachmanim, compassionate sons of compassionate fathers. Private Goldberg slowly took the boy, whose name was Yaakov, under his wing. Goldberg took a strong liking to Yaakov and convinced him to return with him to America. After going through the necessary paperwork, Goldberg officially adopted Yaakov.

Goldberg was active in the Jewish community. One day, he met one of his friends who happened to be a curator of the Jewish Museum in Manhattan. He showed his friend the unique

menorah that Yaakov had saved from the fires of the Holocaust. The curator told Yaakov that the menorah was a rare piece of art, and he immediately offered him \$50,000 for it.

Yaakov was young, but very attached to the menorah. "I will never sell it," he said. "This menorah has been in my family for over two hundred years. I am not selling it to a museum. No amount of money can replace my feelings toward this menorah."

When Chanukah arrived, Yaakov lit the menorah and placed it in the front window of his newly found home. Tears streamed down his face, as he stared at the beautiful lights. This menorah, an ember from the past, symbolized hope - a hope for a better tomorrow.

Yaakov went upstairs to his room to read, while Goldberg remained downstairs with the menorah. A few minutes later, there was a feeble knock at the door, and Goldberg got up to answer. A woman with a heavy German accent stood at the door. She said that she had been walking down the street, when she had suddenly noticed the menorah in the window. She said that she had such a menorah in her family for many years and had never seen another one like it. Could she please come in and take a closer look at it?

Goldberg was happy to invite her to enter, saying that the menorah actually belonged to his son, who could possibly tell her more about it. Goldberg went upstairs and called Yaakov to talk to the woman - who was his long-lost mother! The little menorah, which Yaakov refused to give up, became the catalyst for helping him to piece his family back together. What a moving example of Hashgacha Pratis.

And the sons of Yissacher were Tola...and the sons of Zevulun were Sered...(46:13, 14)

The genesis of the unique partnership between Yissacher and Zevulun was in Egypt, at a time when Torah study and material sustenance were equally difficult to accomplish. Yet, as Chazal imply, even in Egypt Zevulun would take from his meager portion and share with Yissacher, who - after a day of back-breaking debilitating work - found the time to delve into the profundities of Torah. This defines the paradigmatic partnership: for better or for worse, under all circumstances, regardless of the situation, one is obligated to study Torah and, concomitantly, one must support and sustain those who do.

Nachlas Tzvi cites the following story which emphasizes this idea. Horav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, zl, the distinguished rav of Kovno, had grown up in abject poverty. His poverty was to the extent that one winter his shoes became so worn out that he could not possibly wear them. He decided to go to the local shoe factory, which happened to be owned by a wealthy Jew, to ask if he could have a pair of irregular or not-saleable shoes. He borrowed a pair of shoes from a friend in order to make the cold trek to the factory. He met the owner who, after taking one look at the strong, healthy yeshivah student, said, "Under no uncertain terms will I give you a pair of shoes. You seem to be quite healthy. Go out and get a job to earn a living so that you can buy yourself a pair of shoes. I am not prepared to support lazy people!" Rav Yitzchak Elchanan had no choice but to leave, dejected and humiliated. He returned home and prayed to Hashem to help him, to enable him to continue his Torah study uninterrupted.

A few days later, one of the students in the yeshiva came to Rav Yitzchak Elchanan with a

complete outfit of used clothing, which included a pair of shoes. "You know that I am getting married," the student told him, "and I purchased a new outfit for the wedding. Please take this, so that you can continue your Torah studies."

A number of years went by, and Rav Yitzchak Elchanan achieved fame for his brilliance in Torah erudition and his leadership abilities. He was asked to become Kovnor Rav, a position which he accepted. In a short time he became one of the gedolei Yisrael, Torah luminaries of his generation. During his tenure as rav in Kovno, Czar Nikolai issued a terrible decree against the Jews. The communities decided to send two distinguished representatives to intercede on their behalf before the Czar: the Kovnor Rav and the wealthy owner of the shoe factory.

When they arrived in Moscow, they had to wait a few days for the Czar to give them an appointment. When their meeting finally took place, the Czar was so impressed by Rav Yitzchak Elchanan's holy countenance and demeanor that he nullified the decree. He then asked the wealthy Jew to leave the room, so that he could converse with the rav in private. The Jew had no alternative but to leave. After a few hours the doors opened, and the rav came out accompanied by the Czar. As the rav was walking down the steps of the palace, the wealthy Jew turned to the Czar and queried, "What impressed the Czar most about our rav?" The Czar responded, "I sense that his wisdom is that of a Heavenly Angel, and everything he says is as if it emanates from a holy source."

As they were returning back home, the wealthy man requested of Rav Yitzchak Elchanan, "Rebbe, let us make a Yissacher/Zevulun partnership. I will give you half my assets, and you will grant me half of your Torah." "I am sorry," the rav responded, "you are too late. I cannot make a business deal for what has already occurred. It must be arranged prior to the Torah study. I must tell you, furthermore, that you could have accumulated much more years ago in exchange for a simple pair of shoes than you can today with all of your wealth. Regrettably, now it is too late."

If those of us who have the wherewithal to sustain the Torah study of potential gedolei Yisrael would only use foresight, instead of hindsight, the material situation in the yeshivah world would be considerably improved.

While "Zevulun" has incredible merit for his actions on behalf of "Yissacher," it goes without saying that Torah study is still the greater option - if it is at all possible. Charity, kindness, and good deeds are of noble worth, but, as the Tanna says in Meseches Shabbos Peah 127a, "V'Talmud Torah K'neged Kulam." "And the study of Torah is equivalent to all of them." Nachlas Tzvi cites another meaningful story that demonstrates the remarkable merit to be obtained by supporting an individual, availing him the opportunity to learn Torah. A distinguished rav once came upon a poor, elderly street vendor who was selling sandwiches and drinks from his little stand. The rav was moved by this sight, and he went over to purchase something, just to enable the elderly gentleman to earn some money. The seller noted that before him stood a venerable Torah scholar. He began to pour out his heart, sharing with the rav the vicissitudes of his life. Suddenly, in middle of their conversation, the old man interrupted himself to tell the rav about a young boy, his age, in a small village in Lithuania, who was so poor that his parents had not been able to gather sufficient funds to send him to yeshivah. The boy wept and wept, begging his parents to find some way to send him to yeshivah.

"One day," said the old man, "I overheard the boy entreating his father to please let him go. The father looked into his son's pleading eyes and said, 'My child, I would give everything I have so that you could go on to yeshivah, but I have nothing.' The boy could not accept this answer, and he began to cry with such bitter tears that I also began to cry with him.

"I resolved that night that I had to do something to help another boy who wanted so badly to go

study Torah in a yeshivah. I was fortunate to have a job. The hours were long, the physical labor was difficult, and the pay was less than sufficient. Nevertheless, I decided that I was going to set aside a portion of my earnings so that I could send that young boy to yeshivah. Imagine the excitement in his eyes when I knocked on his door and gave his parents the necessary sum for their son to go to yeshivah."

The man finished his story and looked at the rav, asking, "Perhaps you know whatever became of that young boy?" The rav asked him, "What was his name?" "Aharon Kotler," the man responded. When the rav heard this, he took hold of the man with both hands and exclaimed, "Do you know who he is? He is the gadol hador, the Torah leader of our generation. Your selfless act of charity gave the world its gadol hador!"

He sent Yehudah before him to Yosef, to instruct ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

The Midrash explains that Yaakov Avinu sent Yehudah ahead of the family to fulfill a specific mission: to build a house for Torah-study from which instruction will go forth. The Midrash elaborates on this theme. It substantiates its exegesis by noting that when Yosef left his father, he was well versed in that day's lesson, chapter and verse. In fact, when the brothers returned to Yaakov and related to him the wonderful news that Yosef was still alive, he remembered with excitement that last lesson, the laws of eglah arufah, decapitated heifer, which they had learned together. He immediately responded to his sons, saying, "If you can tell me the last halachah I studied with Yosef, I will believe you that he is alive. Otherwise, I have no reason to accept what you are saying," Implied in this statement, says the Midrash, is the fact that Yaakov studied Torah constantly, as did his father and grandfather, Yitzchak and Avraham, before him. He expected the same of his children. Thus, he was sure that if Yosef was alive, he would have acknowledged and shared the last dvar Torah, Torah thoughts, with them. We must endeavor to understand what the Midrash is teaching us. How was he so certain that Yosef would tell the brothers the last Torah lesson he had heard from his father? It is as if it was an understood assumption that Yosef, upon meeting his brothers, would immediately share the dvar Torah with them. Why is this?

Horav Eliyakim Shlesinger, Shlita, derives a number of important lessons in regard to Torah study from this Midrash. Yaakov was certain that Yosef would remember the halachos they had studied together twenty-two years ago. Otherwise, it could not have been his son, Yosef. Moreover, he had no doubt that when he met his brothers, he would have told them the halachah. Why? Precisely because this is the underlying motif of Torah study. It is well-known that any incident which makes an impression upon a person will remain with him his entire life. On the other hand, those episodes in life that have little or no meaning leave a similar impression. People just tend to forget them. For the individual who is osek baTorah, whose primary involvement and endeavor is in the field of Torah, it is his life. Every chiddush, novel interpretation, every dvar Torah, has unique meaning and infinite value. It is priceless and, hence, leaves a lasting impression. The first item of conversation is to share the dvar Torah with whomever he meets. After all, it is his most precious commodity. Who would not share it with his close friends?

With this thought in mind, we can develop a deeper understanding of the mitzvah of limud haTorah. Inherent in the mitzvah of limud haTorah is the imperative that we teach it/share it with

others. Le'lamed, to teach, is an intrinsic component of lilmud, to study. We pray for this daily during Shacharis. We supplicate Hashem to "V'sein b'libeinu binah l'havin u'lehaskil, lishmoa, lilmud u'lalamed, lishmor v'laasos u'lekayim." "Instill in our hearts to understand and elucidate, to listen, learn, teach, safeguard, perform and fulfill all Your Torah's teaching." Just as with no understanding or listening no learning can take place, if there is no performance or fulfillment, the Torah study is meaningless. Likewise, if there is no teaching, there is no learning. The two go hand-in-hand.

Yaakov was acutely aware that one who has learned a novel interpretation - or is in possession of a penetrating halachic treatise - is enthusiastic and filled with excitement. He just cannot wait for the opportunity to share this thought with someone. Why should Yosef be different? He was taught in the proper manner. Why should he not share his halachah, with the first person he encounters after twenty-two years, who would appreciate a Torah thought? This was Torah learning the way it was then, as well as the way it should continue to be taught. Torah is life - and without it one cannot live. This should be the attitude towards Torah study. When this is the case, the eisak b'Torah, involvement in Torah, is not surprising. It is life!

Then Yisrael said to Yosef, "I can die this time, after my having seen your face." (46:30)

After twenty-two years of yearning, of hoping, of clinging to faith, Yaakov finally met his long-lost son, Yosef. How joyous and emotionally charged must have been that moment.

Interestingly, Yaakov never discovered how Yosef became viceroy of Egypt. Indeed, this is one of the great mysteries of Sefer Bereishis. Upon perusing the sources, it seems that Yaakov never questioned Yosef about the sequence of events. The Midrash teaches us: "We can learn the righteousness of Yosef, for he did not want to be secluded with his father, to prevent him from asking him what had transpired with the brothers. He might then curse them." Yosef knew that his father was a tzaddik. Thus, his every word became a decree. This means that the curse would take effect.

We derive from the Midrash that Yosef was a caring and sensitive brother who set up every obstacle to keep his father from asking him to fill in the "blanks" for the last twenty-two years. It does not, however, explain what prevented Yaakov from summoning Yosef to a private father-and-son meeting in order to ask him this penetrating question.

We may ask a related question. Why did Yosef not notify his father of his whereabouts during these twenty-two years? He must have sensed that his father was mourning his loss. Why did he put him through this? Were his father's feelings any less significant than those of his brothers? The Shem Mishmuel responds to this question with the idea that Yosef sensed that he was part of a Divine plan. Consequently, he chose not to divulge his whereabouts. If Hashem had chosen not to reveal to Yaakov that Yosef was alive, then Yosef was going to honor this secret. After all, Yitzchak was aware that Yosef was alive, but, nevertheless, chose not to impart this knowledge to Yaakov. Why should Yosef choose a different approach?

The Shem Mishmuel elaborates on this concept. By accepting the Divine plan, Yosef was able to correct a past problem that had been gnawing at him: the misuse of his speech. He had spoken ill of his brothers, something to which the Torah in Parashas Vayeishav (Bereishis 37:2) attests, "And Yosef would bring evil reports about them to his father." Yosef clearly spoke lashon hara, evil speech, about his brothers. While he had a cheshbon, justifiable reason, for doing what he felt was the right thing, he nonetheless spoke disparagingly against them. He misused his G-d-given power of speech. As a form

of teshuvah, penance, he was determined to remain alert whenever possible, speaking only when he was certain that he was carrying out the Divine will. Hence, Yosef would not carry on any conversation with Yaakov that did not adhere to the Divine will.

In contrast, Yaakov exemplified control in regard to his speech. Chazal tell us that he never said anything unnecessary except for the statement: "Why did you do me evil to tell the man (Yosef) that you had another brother?" (Bereishis 43:6). This statement, on some spiritual plane, catalyzed the need for Yaakov's personal exile. This might be the meaning of the phrase in the Haggadah, "Anus al pi hadibur" which is usually translated as, "compelled by Divine decree," referring to Yaakov's being compelled to go down to Egypt, as, "forced by the word." In this alternate approach, Hashem was not the force that compelled Yaakov to go to Egypt. Rather, Yaakov's own speech necessitated the exile. Under normal circumstances, Yaakov would have had no reason to experience the exile. He was sufficiently holy. It was this one slip of the tongue that required an individual of his impeccable virtue to be forced to go down to Egypt.

Yosef took great pains to ensure that what exited his mouth was holy, pure and necessary. In this one instance, something went wrong - by Divine will. Hashem "made" him speak disparagingly of his brothers in order to create the excuse for the ensuing exile.

Now that Yaakov and Yosef were both in Egypt, their "errors" had to be rectified. What better way than not to speak unless their speech was a direct manifestation of the will of Hashem? We now have an idea why Yaakov could never ask Yosef to fill in the gaps in his life. It was not G-d's will. Ostensibly, Yosef had no idea about Yaakov's speech and its consequent exile. Thus, as far as he knew, his father's speech was not impeded by an external restraint. We now appreciate why Yaakov would never ask Yosef. The Midrash explains that Yosef avoided being alone with his father, lest he be questioned in regard to the past.

And Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" (45:3)

Yosef was revealing his true identity to his brothers. The first question that he asked after he identified himself was, "Ha'od avi chai?" "Is my father still alive?" One wonders at the timing of this question. During the time that Yosef's brothers appeared before him, they mentioned their elderly father several times. Why did Yosef suddenly ask a question whose answer was obvious? Each in his own way, the commentators suggest an interpretation of Yosef's question. In his popular "Maggid" series, Rabbi Paysach Krohn relates a poignant story that offers a new meaning the question, "Is my father still alive?"

The story is about a little boy by the name of Matisyahu, otherwise known as. He was a sad, withdrawn child, the product of a broken marriage. He heard nothing from his father. His mother had remarried quickly to a man who had limited time or patience for him. It was no wonder that the child was depressed and reclusive, maintaining few friendships. It is difficult to be friendly to a boy who is carrying the world's problems on his little shoulders. He attended a yeshivah only because his grandmother wanted him to have a religious education. He had a loving and caring rebbe who did everything to evoke a smile on Matisyahu's face. His rebbe would try to draw him into the classroom dialogue, to no avail. Matisyahu sat in the rear of the classroom in a world of his own.

Each week, the rebbe discussed the parsha narrative in a manner that included his students in

the story. He would ask questions which elicited surprising responses from his young charges. On the week of Parashas Va'yigash, the rebbe was relating how Yosef and Yehudah disagreed concerning whether Binyamin should remain in Egypt. In the Torah narrative, Yehudah was beginning to lose patience with Yosef. He insisted that their aged father needed his son at home. He could not survive the loss of yet another son. He described how the Torah relates that Yosef could no longer contain himself; he could no longer continue to hide his identity from his brothers. He was prepared to reveal his true identity. "I am Yosef," he burst out "Is my father still alive?" he asked.

The rebbe turned to the class and asked, "Why did Yosef ask such a question? His brothers had just finished telling him that they must take Binyamin home in order to protect the health of their aged father. Yosef knew that his father was alive. Why did he ask an unnecessary question?" The students pondered the question. The rebbe scanned the room for answers. Suddenly, a little hand appeared at the rear of the room. The rebbe was taken aback to see that Matisyahu, the boy who was always quiet, who never raised his hand, wanted to say something. The rebbe, understandably shocked, looked at Matisyahu and asked, "Yes, Matisyahu, do you have an answer to the question?" "Yes. I think I do," he said. "I think I know what Yosef meant." "Would you care to share it with the class?" the rebbe inquired anxiously. "Yosef was well aware that his father was alive," Matisyahu began. "Yosef did not ask, 'Is your father alive?' He asked, 'Is my father alive?'"

Does he still think about me? Does he still care about me after all these years of separation? Does he still think of me as his son?' That's what Yosef meant when he asked, 'is my father still alive?'" Tears welled up in the rebbe's eyes as he realized what Matisyahu was implying. As a result of his life experiences this child understood what the other students were unable to comprehend. Matisyahu was talking about Yosef, but he was actually referring to himself. He was describing the sad, frightened boy that sat alone in the back of the class. Matisyahu could well relate to the Yosef who was separated from his father at a young age. While this may not necessarily be the true meaning of Yosef's question, its message should be clear and thought-provoking. Children have feelings and sensitivities. Although they do not always readily express themselves, their eyes, their actions, and their lack of action tell the story. A perceptive parent or teacher can look at a child and sense his hurt, feel his grief, and reach out to him with gentleness and compassion. Only in this way can the true nature of the child begin to shine. The frightening aspect of this situation is what does or does not happen to those children whom no one notices.

And Yosef said to his brothers, I am Yosef....But his brothers could not answer because they felt disconcerted before him. (45:3)

In addressing the concept of tochachah, rebuke, the Midrash states, "Woe is to us on the Day of Judgement, woe is to us on the Day of Reproof. Yosef was the youngest of the tribes, but when he said, "I am Yosef," the brothers were overcome with shame at their misdeeds. When Hashem reveals Himself to each one of us announcing, "I am Hashem," we will certainly be unable to respond as a result of our humiliation. The words, "to each one of us," which in the vernacular of the Midrash is rendered, "l'fi mah shehu" "each one according to what he is," is a powerful statement. What does it mean? Does emphasizing the status of each individual make a difference in the rebuke?

Horav Shalom Schwadron, zl, takes a pragmatic approach towards explaining this Midrash. We find young men who spend their time in a yeshivah environment. Some learn more, while some learn

less. There are some, however, who just fall through the "cracks". For some reason they just are not successful, never achieving the standard of scholarship which they are capable of attaining. They justify their limited accomplishment, attributing it to being on the short end of the Almighty's gift of acumen. Some people are bright, this particular individual does not perceive himself as one of them. Some have the ability to delve into the Torah's profundities, he just does not have the "keilim," utensils/achieves, necessary to achieve such a level of erudition. The individual's response is: I am not bright enough, astute enough, diligent enough.

The excuses would be almost admissible if the individual's lack of "ability" was consistent. Suddenly, when he assumes a position outside the parameters of the Torah educational network, he becomes a "macher," mover and shaker. He exhibits sheer brilliance in klal work, communal endeavors; his business acumen is sharp and penetrating; his devotion to, and diligence in, carrying out his projects is nothing short of incredible. What happened?

Indeed, this individual will have to give an explanation to a Higher authority. When he will come to the Olam Ha'emes, the World of Truth, Olam Habah, he will be asked about this inconsistency. He will be questioned why his "head" was not able to handle the Torah study, but when it came to secular pursuits, he manifested capabilities beyond the scope of what he had previously demonstrated in the yeshivah. The answer is obvious: It is not his head; it is his heart. It is the ratzon ha'lev, the will of one's heart, that determines what his "head" will be capable of achieving. He simply does not want to learn! He would rather devote his time to other pursuits.

When we wonder what motivated his original response, what was there that suggested his "incapability" to make it in the Torah world, his answer would be: his friend, his classmate. He looked around and saw how well everyone else was performing, how smart they were, how diligent and dedicated they were. He decided that he was not as well-equipped as they to master Torah knowledge. He sought to be like them, and when he saw that his aspiration was not a reality, he gave up trying. Regrettably, too many of us want to be like someone else. Hashem wants us to achieve our own potential, not that of someone else. He will rebuke us "I'fi mah shehu", "each one according to what he is." We are not to compete with others, but only to be ourselves.

How does one go about maximizing his own potential? Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, draws the following picture. People attribute greater significance to the few mitzvos they perform, the little learning they do, the small amount of time they invest in acts of chesed, kindness, than they are really worth. Indeed, one may think that when the moment that he returns his soul to his Maker occurs, he will be greeted with "open arms", accorded great honor and seated "up front" in the place of honor. All this will be the result of his paltry observance; he is sadly mistaken. When he confronts the moment of truth, he will clearly see that he wasted a good part of his life on foolishness. How many of us determine the quota of time we can expend for Torah study and endeavor, only to wallow away so much of our precious time on frivolous preoccupation. During that time we could have earned valuable credits for a life of eternal bliss.

Horav Schwadron relates a famous story about the great gaon and Rosh HaYeshiva of Volozhin, the Netziv, zl. Upon completing his magnum opus, his commentary on the Sheiltos D'Rav Achai Gaon, he made a great feast and invited many scholars to join in his celebration. He explained the reason for this unusual display of joy: "When I was a young boy of nine years, I overheard my father and mother speaking about me," related the Netziv. 'What will be with our Naftalik?' his father asked. 'We have provided him with a number of the finest rebbeim, Torah teachers, to no avail. He just does not seem to be interested. Perhaps, we should teach him a trade.' When I heard this, the Netziv continued, I was

heartbroken. My father was about to let me become a baal melachah, tradesman. How could this happen to me? I began to cry bitterly. I then made up my mind that nothing would stand in my way. I was going to study diligently and become a talmid chacham. This sefer is the fruit of my labor, the result of my studies." "Imagine," continued the Netziv, "had I not wept. What would have become of me? I would have become a tradesman. What is so bad about that? Let us say I would have become a tailor. I still would be observant; I would attend shul every day. I would even set aside time everyday to study Torah. In short, I would be an observant Jew, true to my heritage, devoted to Hashem. Is that so bad?

"Veritably, there is nothing wrong with such a scenario. When I would come up to Heaven, however, they would say to me, 'Naftali, Naftali, you were a good Jew. But was that your purpose in life? Were you placed on the world to become a tailor? Do you realize that with your acumen and ability you could have authored the Haamek Shaaloh on the Sheiltos? True, you lived a decent life, but did you achieve your potential?'

"Now you understand why, with the completion of this commentary I am overwhelmed with joy." Each individual is judged according to what he is and what he could and should have become. Horav Schwadron ends his thesis with a penetrating thought from the Alter, zl, m'Slabodka. The Alter was once standing by the window of his study when he motioned to his student Horav Aizik Sher, zl, to come over and look out the window. "Look out the window and see the large cemetery outside," the Alter said to Reb Aizik. "You might think that the cemetery is the large field situated at the outskirts of the city and that this is only a public street. You are wrong. There are people going back and forth- people with incredible potential for greatness in Torah. But, they were 'inspired' to choose another field of endeavor. Do you know what is written about such a person? 'Here lies the great saint and scholar, the eminent Rosh HaYeshiva etc.' This person could have achieved the greatest heights, but he did not. His epitaph accompanies him through the street. There is, however, one difference between the cemetery outside the city and the one in front of our eyes. There they bury dead people. Here they bury live ones." This is one story we might want to remember as we make decisions about our future and that of our children. What we decide today may one day come back to haunt us. So Yisrael set out with all he had and he came to Beer-Sheva, (45:28)

Yaakov Avinu was on his way to Egypt to finally be reunited with his long lost son, Yosef. Why did he stop in Beer-Sheva? It should not normally have been a part of his itinerary. The Midrash replies that Yaakov stopped to cut down cedar trees that had originally been planted by Avraham Avinu. Yaakov knew that one day Klal Yisrael would be liberated from Egypt, and they would build a Mishkan, Sanctuary, in the desert. These cedar trees would serve as the lumber for the Mishkan. What is the significance of these cedar trees and why was it crucial that they be the ones that were planted by Avraham Avinu?

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, explains that people by nature attribute their success to their own endeavor, "kochi v'otzem yadi," "my power and my strong hand." "I did it without anyone's help" is the prevalent attitude.

You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children and your children's children...and all that is yours. (45:10) Why did Hashem choose Goshen as the home for the newly arriving Jewish immigrants? Rashi in Sefer Vayikra comments that Goshen was the most morally depraved area in Egypt. The Egyptian people were the most licentious, immoral people in the world and Goshen was the nadir of Egyptian depravity. This makes our question even stronger: Why Goshen? Furthermore, Yosef seems to emphasize that if they were to live in Goshen, they and their

children and grandchildren would remain closer to him. What is it about Goshen that would potentially catalyze this closeness?

Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita, suggests that this question alludes to the age-old debate: Is it better to send our children to be among those people who are of low moral character, who are clearly base and reprehensible -- or to those that are beinonim, average people, who like so many around us maintain a semblance of decency while concealing that they are acceding to our society's present state of morality? Simply, one would believe that it is best to remain among the average person rather than to be exposed to apparent evil. There is a school of thought that disagrees, however, contending that it is easier to raise children in an environment in which the lines of demarcation between "them" and "us" are clearly discernible. It is more difficult to protect our children from those who outwardly "act" moral, "speak" virtuous, go through the "motions" of being observant, but inwardly are the converse. Yosef felt that in Goshen, the nadir of Egypt's depravity, he could more easily define the difference between good and bad. Thus, he would be better able to protect his brothers, their families, and the ensuing generations. If they were to live in Goshen, so that they would remain close to him geographically, they could not err in assimilating with a people that was clearly immoral. This geographic proximity would serve to maintain their spiritual integrity and relationship to Yosef and his way of life.

*And he (Yaakov) saw the wagons that Yosef had sent...then the spirit of their father Yaakov was revived.
(45:27)*

The last area of Torah study in which Yaakov and Yosef had engaged together was the law of eglah arufah, the calf whose neck is broken to expiate the sin of an unsolved murder. The word agalah, wagon, is similar to that of eglah, calf. Yosef was giving his father a sign that he was observant; he still remembered the last subject they had studied together. The commentators further explain the meaning of Yosef's message to his father via the wagons he sent and their relation to the eglah arufah. The Veitzener Rav, Horav Tzvi Hirsch Meisels, zl, cites Targum Yonasan who says that worms had emerged from the victim's corpse, tracing a trail to the murderer.

They would afflict him to the point that he confessed to his crime.

The lessons to be derived herein are twofold: First, eventually one's sins become evident. One should not think that he can conceal his iniquity forever. Second, yesurim, pain/affliction/suffering, exist to expiate sin, to help the individual to realize that he did something wrong and should repent. This is the lesson of eglah arufah that Yaakov taught Yosef: Do not be concerned that something will happen to you in the field and the perpetrators will not become known. Hashem has many agents to carry news and to publicize what has happened. Yosef sent his wagons to his father, symbolizing the lessons he had learned from eglah arufah: "Yes, father, I have understood the challenge to my spirituality. I realize that I have experienced my tzaros for a purpose, and I have only been hidden from you temporarily. I knew that one day you would find out what happened on that fateful day that you sent me to attend to my brothers." We cannot hide from Hashem. When we think we can elude Him, we are only eluding reality. The only ones we truly fool are ourselves.

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen...and he arrived in the region of Goshen. (46:28)

The word "goshen" -- comprised of the letters gimel, shin, nun, hay -- has the same gematria, numerical value, as Moshiach: mem, shin, yud, ches. Bnei Yissaschar explains the relationship between these two terms in the following manner: Moshiach Tzidkeinu is called upon to redeem us from the exile imposed upon us by the four nations -- Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks and the Romans. Moshiach ben David, who will be our redeemer, will be preceded by Moshiach ben Yosef. Yaakov Avinu hoped to see this meeting of his two sons, the forebears of this messianic mission. Yosef represents the ten lost tribes, and Yehudah represents the two tribes that remained faithful. The merging of these two, Yehudah and Yosef, in Goshnah - Moshiach, was to pave the way for the redemption through their descendants, many generations later.

The Bnei Yissaschar continues, noting the fact that the four letters of the word Goshnah are the same as the letters inscribed on the Chanukah dreidel. Chanukah is celebrated during the same time of the year that Parashas Vayigash is read in the Torah. The letters are the initials of those forces within man which, when corrupted, cause the sufferings of the exile imposed by the nations mentioned above. Through the vehicle of exile and suffering this corruption is purged. These forces consist of the physical, emotional, and intellectual elements of the soul, in addition to the general force, which comprises the totality of human capabilities. Guf = physical - gimel, seichel = intellectual - shin; nefesh = emotional - nun; hakol = everything / totality of human aptitudes = hay. The first letters of these words coincide with the word Goshnah. On the festival of Chanukah, when the flame / light of our messianic hope begins to shine forth in the darkness of our exile, the dreidel becomes the symbol of the four kingdoms that dominated us as a result of our four-fold deterioration. Concomitant to this reminder of our exile and its cause, we reflect upon the other meaning of these letters: the message of Moshiach and the hope of redemption. As the dreidel spins, we are reminded that all human history "rotates" around the axis of Moshiach and that everything will one day lead to Goshnah = Moshiach. May he come speedily in our days!

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

The Midrash interprets the word "l'horos" as to teach. This implies that Yehudah's mission was more than making physical arrangements for the arriving family. He was to establish a house of study, a place from where horaah, Torah instruction and direction, would emanate outward to the community. In addition, Yaakov was teaching the importance of the centrality of Torah study in our lives. The first priority in establishing a Jewish community is establishing an educational system. Torah is our soul, and without it our communities will dissipate Jewishly. We have only to peruse Jewish history in this country to notice what has happened to the many communities that have hosted great Torah scholars, who for reasons -- for the most part beyond their control -- were not able to build a Jewish Day School. These communities, and the descendants of those people, are lost to Torah and its way of life. Acculturation catalyzed the disease; assimilation followed; and spiritual death marked the end. Without Torah, we are not a nation.

The word "l'horos" is a totally new concept in the vernacular to which we have been accustomed in previous parshios. We have studied the concept of yeshivah, as in the Yeshivah of Shem and Ever. We know that Rivkah went "lidrosh es Hashem" at the "bais ha'medrash." Why does

Yehudah's yeshivah in Goshen carry the name of "bais horaah"? Horav Shlomo Margolis, Shlita, in his sefer Darkei Hashleimus, suggests a practical reason for this "new" type of yeshivah or -- more exactly -- new focus in Torah institutional study. Until this juncture in their development, the Jewish people consisted of a small band of Jews, a family unit. Although it was powerful and self-sufficient, it was but a small group. That the Jews were hated by the Egyptians, as well as the rest of their neighbors, is evident by the manner in which the sar ha'mashkim, Pharaoh's chief cupbearer, referred to Yosef -- as a lowly Hebrew slave. With Yosef's rise to power, however, the name of the Jew was to be greatly enhanced. He would be revered and desired. He would be invited to join in with the elite Egyptian society. The hatred would still be there, but it would be camouflaged for diplomatic and political purposes. Yaakov sought to fortify his children and descendants for this new way of life, to prepare them for acceptance by Egyptian society. He feared their acculturation. Thus, he tried to offset it via Torah-study that would instruct them about how to live in a society that presents such spiritual challenges. His children would need a "bais horaah," a yeshivah that would teach. This educational institution would strengthen their spiritual resolve and instruct them concerning coping with the challenges of the contemporary world.

We suggest an alternative approach towards understanding Yaakov Avinu's underlying motif in dispatching Yehudah to establish a bais horaah: The word horaah has a deeper meaning. It means to paskin, render judgement, adjudicate the law. Yaakov was conveying an important message to us regarding Torah chinuch, education. We do not establish schools that are mediocre. When we undertake to build a school or yeshivah, our goals must be lofty. All too often, we build according to necessity, not according to purpose. It is not enough for us to build merely for survival; we must build so that Judaism should flourish. When we build schools that are mediocre, we are only paving the way for others - less scrupulous and less spiritually inclined -- to take over and destroy the community that we have been attempting to save. Yaakov did not want a yeshivah just to fulfill the community's current needs. He instructed Yehudah to establish an institution from which would emanate horaah, the highest level of Torah-learning - lomdus, psak, adjudicating the law, areas of Torah-learning reserved for the greatest, most erudite Torah institutions. When we build, we must develop a strong institution with lofty goals, or we will be left with nothing.

This idea is relevant to all areas of Judaism: We must aim higher, we must have loftier goals. Many of us have regrettably become satisfied with token Judaism: going to shul and davening - a little; going to a shiur and listening - a little; getting involved in Jewish organizations - a little. We do things by rote, skimming across the surface of Jewish life, never reaching higher by undertaking goals that are significant and meaningful. This attitude has affected the way we raise our children. We do not want to place demands on them for fear it might burden them. We spoon-feed them educationally and are proud of their accomplishments - even if they are insignificant at best. Our goals for their future are defined by the amount of material success they will achieve. We do not want to burden them! What we do not realize is that our attitude towards Jewish life and growth reflects an element of acculturation. We do not want to face the fact that the statements we make, and our goals for ourselves and our children, are the results of living in a society whose values represent the antithesis of Torah values.

Yosef gathered all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan...and Yosef brought the money into Pharaoh's palace. (47:14)

Yosef's brilliance in gathering all the wealth in Egypt and Canaan is exceeded only by his

fidelity to Pharaoh. He kept nothing for himself. As noted by Sforno, he had every right to ask for a "commission" for all of his hard work. Not Yosef; his life's endeavor exemplified loyalty, virtue, and, consequently, Kiddush Hashem. Ramban reiterates this idea as he praises Yosef's faithfulness to Pharaoh when a lesser person might have "permitted" himself access to some of this incredible wealth. This idea is evident earlier, when Pharaoh literally commands Yosef to take wagons and send them to his father. Everyone was acutely aware of Yosef's impeccable integrity and loyalty to the king, assured that he would never abuse his royal position for personal gain. Abarbanel says that if Yosef had not been commanded to take the wagons, he would not have sent them on his own. This is but a glimpse of the man who personally amassed for Pharaoh practically all of the wealth in the world, a man who had access to everything, but never took personal advantage of his position.

This idea is confirmed by the Talmud in Pesachim 119 where Rabbi Yehudah cites Shmuel who states that Yosef gathered all of the gold and silver in Egypt and Canaan in order to give it to Pharaoh. The Talmud concludes that when Klal Yisrael left Egypt, they took all of this material gain with them. Incredible! To paraphrase Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita: One who understands what is happening should be amazed with what he sees, as the guiding Hand of Hashem becomes apparent throughout this maze of affairs. All of the money ended up in Egypt. All of the money eventually ends up in the hands of the Jewish People as they leave Egypt. Why?

This is all part of the Bris Bein Ha'Besarim, Covenant of the Parts, when Hashem informed Avraham of Klal Yisrael's impending incarceration and exile in Egypt. He also told him that when they leave, "afterwards they shall leave with great wealth" (Bereishis 10:14). How little do we understand of the present! How minute is our perception of current events! It is only in the future that we are afforded a glimpse of Hashem's Divine plan. Right now, all we can and should do is to believe and to trust be'emunah sheleimah, with complete faith in the Almighty.

And Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef." But his brothers could not answer him because they were left disconcerted before him. (45:3)

When Yosef finally revealed himself to his brothers, they were so overwhelmed with shock that they did not respond. We find two statements in the Midrash regarding the lack of "dialogue" between Yosef and his brothers. First, Abba Kohen Bardela declares, "Woe is to us from the Day of Rebuke: Woe is to us from the Day of Judgement. Bilaam was the wisest of the pagans, yet he could not withstand the rebuke of his donkey; Yosef was the youngest of the tribes, yet his brothers could not withstand his rebuke. When Hashem comes and rebukes each one (of us) according to what he is, how much moreso (will it be unbearable). Second, Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaryah says, "Woe is to us from the Day of Rebuke. Yosef was of flesh and blood, yet his brothers could not bear his rebuke. Hashem, Who is the Judge and Plaintiff Who sits in judgement on everyone and judges each one, how much moreso will a human of flesh and blood not withstand His rebuke!" What does Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaryah add to Abba Kohen Bardela's statement? Also, why does Abba Kohen Bardela use Bilaam's donkey as an example of unbearable rebuke, while Raabi Eliezer ben Azaryah does not?

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, explains that the Midrash is focusing on two different aspects of tochachah, rebuke. Abba Kohen Bardela opines that the goal of rebuke is to bring a person to the point of bushah, embarrassment. He achieves this goal through the comparison to Bilaam's donkey. Imagine, that as we are walking down the road we meet an incredible talking animal! We would undoubtedly be surprised. Bilaam did not seem taken aback. He had no problem conversing with the

donkey. In fact, he had the audacity to respond to it with chutzpah. However, when the donkey, said, "I am the donkey that you have ridden on all this time. You put me in grave danger," Bilaam was silent. Nobody, regardless of his position or his station in life, can face the truth.

The same idea applies to Yosef during his confrontation with his brothers. As long as they did not come face to face with the truth, they were fine. Once the truth was revealed, they could no longer hide; they had to own up to their responsibilities. Before they had been challenged by the truth, they had been able to rationalize their actions. They failed to have rachmanus on Yosef when he begged them for mercy. When Yosef exclaimed, "Ani Yosef," "I am Yosef", however, the entire situation changed. Yosef's dreams were realized! The same Yosef whom they had determined to be a rodef, hunter, who was out to destroy them, stood before them. They had adjudicated that "this" evil person should be put to death. The truth was now clear for all to see: Yosef was really a righteous, virtuous person who had no intention of hurting them in any way. The truth overwhelmed them.

Abba Kohen Bardela contends that revealing the truth is the essence of rebuke. For instance, consider the individual who claims he does not have sufficient funds to give to charity. Yet, he seems to have money for every materialistic notion in order to gratify himself. Consider, also, the individual who never has time to study Torah, but wastes his time on every narishkeit, foolish activity, in his path. Rebuke demonstrates the truth and brings about shame, which will hopefully -- in turn -- effect teshuvah.

The other aspect of rebuke, noted by Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaryah, does not focus upon emphasizing the truth. He feels that in order to demonstrate the truth one must himself be an ish emes, a man who exemplifies the truth. Unfortunately, this virtue is not as commonplace as it should be. Consequently, he holds the opinion that tochachah has one goal: to portray the halachic implications of what the person is doing. A man should know that he is judged in accordance with the law by a judge who adjudicates the law - and that there is a law and a judge who will respond to his transgression. No sin will go unnoticed or unpunished. Yosef told his brothers, "I am Yosef. You seem to be concerned about your father's pain should Binyamin fail to return home. Why were you not concerned about your father's anguish when you sold me? I will not accept any rationale regarding Binyamin's return, as long as I am aware that you did not have this same concern for our father's feelings when you sold me." They could not respond. They were overwhelmed by the logic. If Yosef's brothers were left speechless before their brother, the judge, how much more so will we be stunned when we ultimately face the Supreme Judge - Hashem. The halachah will confront us - our guilt will be apparent, and the Judge will mete out the punishment. Do we need more to serve as an effective rebuke?

And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you. (44:5)

In an attempt to assuage his brothers' fears, Yosef told them that Hashem had designed his migration from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt so that Yosef could prepare for their eventual arrival. He emphasizes two points: "Do not be distressed," and "Do not reproach yourselves." What is the difference between these two references to accepting blame for what had occurred? Horav Eliyahu Schesinger, Shlita, explains that two factors contributed to their distress. First, they were bothered by the fact that they had wrongly suspected Yosef of attempting to harm them. They assumed that his dreams were nothing more than manifestations of his own visions of grandeur. They now understood that Yosef had always been a tzaddik who had never harbored intentions to hurt them. Second, as a

result of their erroneous suspicions, they had rendered the halachah incorrectly regarding Yosef. It is one thing to make a mistake about someone; it is an entirely different situation when one passes halachic censure, or, even worse -- as in this case -- to rule that Yosef deserved the death penalty. They were distressed over their error in judgement and angry at the fact that they had been prepared to execute their own verdict.

Yosef responded to their concerns. Their first question concerned how Yosef rose to power in Egypt. If he was really a tzaddik when he left his father's home and he lived all these years in a decadent, immoral society, how did he survive on a spiritual plane? Yosef explained that G-d sent him to Egypt for a purpose. Only when a person loses sight of his goals does he regress spiritually. Yosef, however, always viewed himself as a shliach, messenger/agent of Hashem with a specific goal in life. Such a person rises above his environment; he transcends his element as he carries out his "mission."

Regarding the anger they had manifest concerning the actual mechirah, sale, the fruition of their mistaken beliefs, he explained that in this situation the "end might justify the means." He cites the Shiniever Rav, zl, in his commentary to on Parashas Shemos, who explains the words of Chazal regarding Yisro's daughters, "An Egyptian man saved us." When Yisro's daughters expressed their gratitude to Moshe for intervening on their behalf and protecting them from the shepherds, Moshe responded, "The Egyptian that I killed is responsible for your rescue. Therefore, when your father asks you, 'Who saved you?' tell him it was an Egyptian man." What did Moshe imply to them? What difference did it make who had saved them?

The Shiniever Rav explains that sometimes one performs a deed which at the time he thinks is a mitzvah. Sometime later, however, he has second thoughts. Perhaps his intentions were not that virtuous; perhaps it really was not a mitzvah after all. How does one recognize the truth? How does he discern between a mitzvah and the converse? He should look at the consequences of his actions. If they are praiseworthy, then the dictum, "A mitzvah causes another mitzvah," applies. If the result, however, was not positive, if the consequences of his actions were far from admirable, it is an indication that the original deed was inappropriate. This is consistent with the dictum, "A sin causes another sin."

When Moshe killed the Egyptian, he began to rethink his action. Could it be that he had acted in haste? Perhaps his actions were too harsh? Did he have the right to take someone's life? When he saw how killing the Egyptian led to his arrival in Midyan, just in time to rescue Yisro's daughters, he realized that killing the Egyptian was the proper course of action. Similarly, in Yosef's dialogue with his brothers, he told them, "It is true that your suspicions regarding me were unfounded, and, consequently, you were wrong in selling me. Hashem, however, had different plans. He wanted me to be in Egypt to prepare the way for you. In other words, it was not you who sent me to Egypt, it was Hashem who set the events in motion. Do not be angry with yourselves, since you were actually performing Hashem's will."

And he (Yaakov) saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him. (45:27)

When Yaakov saw the wagons that Yosef sent, he was filled with joy and excitement. These wagons carried a profound message to Yaakov. Chazal explain that the Hebrew word "agalah," wagon, is similar to the word "eglah," calf. Yosef intended to hint to his father that he was spiritually healthy by making a reference to the eglah arufah, which was the last area of Torah that Yaakov had studied with Yosef prior to his being sold as a slave. The eglah arufah is a calf which was killed symbolizing the innocence of the elders of a city where a murder had been committed. Yosef was telling his father that he remembered what they had learned so many years ago. The Torah was still fresh in his mind,

because its practice was still so much a part of his life.

A deeper message can be derived from this theoretic dialogue. It was not by chance that Yaakov was studying the laws of eglah arufah with Yosef on that fateful day. It was also not a coincidence that Yosef sent agalos, wagons, to remind Yaakov of this fact. Yaakov studied the laws of eglah arufah, because it was relevant to that day. Yosef's response was that he was also studying the lessons of eglah arufah on this very day. Why? What was Yaakov's intention, and what was Yosef's response? Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, explains that the underlying motif of eglah arufah, its message and the lesson it teaches, can be summed up with one word: achrayos, responsibility. The Torah tells us that we are responsible for what goes on around us. Our area of concern must extend beyond ourselves. We must care for, and be sensitive to, the needs of others. One who does not care about others is ultimately liable for the consequences of his lack of responsibility.

Every action that we perform has consequences, some immediate and some that are far-reaching. To be oblivious of this fact is to hide from reality. One who rises late for Shacharis and attends minyan in another shul would seem to be a perfect example of this thesis. A thinking person would assume that this person had davened elsewhere. One who is not astute might derive from his absence that it is not necessary to attend davening every day. Regrettably, people infer various messages from the actions or inactions of others. All this is consistent with the concept of achrayos, responsibility.

The parsha of eglah arufah teaches us the lesson of responsibility. If there is a murderer somewhere in the city, the elders are inherently responsible for the "results" of their lack of responsibility. Perhaps the murderer's "plight," his lack of funds, his depression, the various circumstances that led to his tragic downfall, should have been addressed. They should have provided for the murderer. Perhaps, had he not been under pressure, he would have been more careful, so that this tragedy might have been averted. These are all aspects of achrayos.

All of these questions were coursing through Yaakov Avinu's mind. As Patriarch of the home, he had to take responsibility for Yosef's disappearance. While his sons actually performed the deed, perhaps something was wrong with the manner in which he raised them. Could it have been that he ultimately bore the responsibility? If the elders are taken to task for a murder to which they clearly had no connection, why should he not have had to answer for the actions of his sons? Did he precipitate the jealousy among the brothers? Chazal seem to think that the multi-colored coat, the kesones pasim, was related to their attitude towards him.

Yosef took responsibility. He had no taanos, complaints, about his brothers. He perceived Hashem Yisborach's guiding force throughout the circumstances of his life. He did not blame, he did not punish, he did not censure. He accepted responsibility. That is what his father taught him when they last learned the laws of eglah arufah. He taught him to look beyond the obvious, search for the hidden reason, and accept the tremendous burden of responsibility. Only then could he build the foundation of Klal Yisrael in galus. It is easy to blame others. We do it all the time. There are some who survive only by deferring responsibility to someone else. They, regrettably, do not understand that sooner or later they will have to accept responsibility for their actions, as well as for all of the times they shirked their responsibility, wrongly blaming others for their own ineptitude. Is it any wonder that when Yaakov saw the agalos, he was filled with joy in the knowledge that Yosef had not forgotten their last -- and perhaps most profound -- lesson?

And he (Yaakov) sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead for him in Goshen. (46:28)

Rashi cites the Midrash which interprets the word "l'horos" to mean "to teach." This implies that Yehudah, the leader of the brothers, was sent ahead to establish a makom Torah, a House of Torah study, a yeshivah to prepare for the spiritual development of those coming to Egypt. What about Yosef, who was a tzaddik, who had maintained his spiritual level throughout his ordeal in exile, who certainly knew the country? Why was he not charged with founding the yeshivah?

The various commentators rationalize Yaakov's decision. Horav Dov Eliezerov, zl, offers a practical solution to the problem. He relates that once in Brisk, on Yom Kippur night, Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, went over to a wealthy Jew who had stayed up all night reciting Tehillim. He said to the man, "You know that in the Czar's army every soldier has his specific position and post. If he is caught changing positions, he can be court-martialed or, even worse, shot. Everyone must serve in his designated position. You also have a position - due to being blessed with financial means. It would serve the community more if you had stayed in your position and inquired throughout the community as to who needs heat for the upcoming winter months. For you to recite Tehillim at this time is tantamount to leaving your post!"

Yosef was similarly charged by Heaven to oversee the sustenance of a world. This is the duty of a tzaddik, who, through his merit, the world is sustained. It is not his function to establish a yeshivah. That was to be left to Yehudah, the Rosh Yeshivah.

Yosef took responsibility. He had no taanos, complaints, about his brothers. He perceived Hashem Yisborach's guiding force throughout the circumstances of his life. He did not blame, he did not punish, he did not censure. He accepted responsibility. That is what his father taught him when they last learned the laws of eglah arufah. He taught him to look beyond the obvious, search for the hidden reason, and accept the tremendous burden of responsibility. Only then could he build the foundation of Klal Yisrael in galus. It is easy to blame others. We do it all the time. There are some who survive only by deferring responsibility to someone else. They, regrettably, do not understand that sooner or later they will have to accept responsibility for their actions, as well as for all of the times they shirked their responsibility, wrongly blaming others for their own ineptitude. Is it any wonder that when Yaakov saw the agalos, he was filled with joy in the knowledge that Yosef had not forgotten their last -- and perhaps most profound -- lesson?

And he (Yaakov) sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead for him in Goshen. (46:28)

Rashi cites the Midrash which interprets the word "l'horos" to mean "to teach." This implies that Yehudah, the leader of the brothers, was sent ahead to establish a makom Torah, a House of Torah study, a yeshivah to prepare for the spiritual development of those coming to Egypt. What about Yosef, who was a tzaddik, who had maintained his spiritual level throughout his ordeal in exile, who certainly knew the country? Why was he not charged with founding the yeshivah?

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Rashi interprets the word "l'horos" to mean "to teach." Yaakov sent Yehudah to prepare a makom Torah, a place for Torah study, to lay the foundation for Torah dissemination in Egypt. The Midrash asserts that Yaakov sent Yehudah because he was on good terms with Yosef. Certainly, Yosef would have done everything within his power to assist any emissary of his father. The Midrash implies, however, that it would have been inappropriate to send Yehudah to establish a yeshivah had his relationship with Yosef not been one of total harmony.

This seems difficult to understand. Yehudah was selected because of his incredible capabilities. He was sovereign over the brothers. He reigned over them, not only in terms of physical prowess; he surpassed them intellectually and spiritually as well. He distinguished himself as the most appropriate choice to be the Rosh Yeshivah. Yet, if his relationship with Yosef had been somewhat strained, Yaakov would have passed over him in favor of a less capable individual. The Midrash seems to imply that had there been even a slight rift between Yosef and Yehudah, Yaakov would not have chosen the strongest leader for his yeshiva.

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, Shlita, infers from this that regardless of the significance of establishing a particular institution, one may not transgress the parameters of derech erez, good manners. If Yehudah and Yosef were not "getting along," then it would have been inappropriate for Yaakov to send Yehudah--even if the yeshivah would have suffered. Horav Leibowitz adds that this idea only applies in the event that Yosef has a reasonable cause for being upset with Yehudah. If, however, Yosef's reason was something he had purported without justification, it would not have served as an obstacle to establishing a makom Torah under Yehudah's leadership.

We derive from this idea that one may build Torah only upon the foundation of derech erez and ethics. Apparently, a Torah institution that is not founded on ethical behavior cannot succeed. Certainly one may not attempt to build a Torah institution through methods that are unscrupulous or with funds whose source is questionable. An endeavor or institution whose goal is the pursuit of truth must be founded upon and sustained with truth.

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

Yaakov sent Yehudah ahead of the family to prepare for their arrival. The Midrash understands

the word "l'horos" according to its Hebrew definition, "to teach." Yaakov sent Yehudah to found a yeshivah, a place where their family could study Torah. We infer from Yaakov's action that Torah study takes priority over any other endeavor. When a community is being developed, one must first establish a Torah institution, nurturing its inhabitants spiritually. The commentators address the fact that Yehudah, not Yosef, was chosen to establish the yeshivah, even though Yosef was a distinguished talmid chacham, who had already been in Egypt. The consensus of opinion is that apparently Yehudah was more suited to be the Rosh Yeshivah than Yosef. Some feel that Yosef, as a world leader, would be inclined to inject a degree of secular perspective into the yeshivah's "mission statement." Survival in galus, exile, requires pure Torah study. Yehudah represents Torah study in its most pristine form.

Horav Avigdor Nebentzhal, Shlita, explains that Yosef was unequivocally a tzaddik. He had remained totally committed to Torah and mitzvos even during his twenty-two year separation from his father. He accorded a greater distinction to politics and the running of the government, however, than to pure Torah study. This is evident from Yosef's desire that Yaakov place his right hand upon Menashe's head. Menashe was directly involved with his father in governing Egypt, while Efraim spent his entire day studying Torah. Menashe certainly spent a part of his day immersed in Torah study, but Efraim was totally immersed in it. The establishment of a yeshivah and its spiritual maintenance must be under the leadership of an individual who is exclusively dedicated to Torah study.

We may wonder, if Yehudah represents the ideal, why did Yaakov establish that the basic blessing a father gives his son is "May Hashem make you like Efraim and Menashe"? Why not aspire for the optimal choice--Yehudah? Some commentators suggest that Yaakov foresaw that most of Am Yisrael would not be devoted entirely to Torah study. He, therefore, blessed the masses in such a manner that those who do not have the opportunity to engage in Torah study exclusively, should be as Menashe - who exemplified the ben Torah who was also involved in secular pursuits. Yaakov hoped that the relationship between Efraim and Menashe--the son who engaged exclusively in Torah and the son who was also involved in areas of "derech eretz" -- would set the standard for their descendants. He hoped that they would co-exist in harmony with love and respect for one another.

We suggest another idea that might be implied by Yaakov Avinu's brachah. Yaakov linked Efraim and Menashe together for the express purpose of teaching us that since Efraim is the ideal, we must approach Menashe's way of life from Efraim's perspective. In other words, Menashe's hashkofas ha'chaim, philosophy of life, his dealings in the secular world--his relationship with people, must reflect a Torah view. Menashe should represent the ben Torah in the broader world. This distinction should be evident in every area of his endeavor whether one is like Efraim or like Menashe, Torah must reign supreme in his life and be manifest in his lifestyle.

Perhaps there is another reason that Yaakov selected Yehudah to be the Rosh Yeshivah in Goshen. Yehudah was granted malchus, sovereignty over Klal Yisrael, because of his ability to be "modeh al ha'emes," concede the truth. He did not shy away and blame others, which has lately become a mode of life for so many. He owned up to his responsibility. If he erred, he confessed to his sin, accepting the consequences. An educator, be it a parent, teacher, or Torah scholar, must be able to say that he made a mistake. One who cannot or will not concede his mistakes should not be a mentor--of any sort. Yehudah's yeshivah, like every yeshivah that has followed after it, was built upon the foundation of emes. The ensuing success of any institution is dependent upon adherence to this standard.

And Yosef gathered all the money that was to be found in the land of Egypt. (47:14)

In the Talmud Pesachim 119a, Chazal relate that Yosef buried three treasures in Egypt. One of the treasures was revealed to Korach. The other was revealed to Antoninus of Rome, who was a friend of Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi. The third remains hidden, to be revealed in the future. While many commentators understand the words of Chazal to refer to material wealth, as we know that Korach was an unusually wealthy person, the Yalkut Hadrush identifies Yosef's ideas as the primary aspect of his wealth. Yosef left a legacy--three lessons to be gleaned and studied.

The first lesson is one that Korach inadvertently affirmed for us. Regardless of man's plans, Hashem's will prevails. Yosef's brothers envied and hated him. They almost executed his murder, they spared him at the last minute only to sell him as a slave. He was purchased by an Egyptian priest and became his foreman, only to lose his position when the priest's wife wrongfully accused him of misconduct. He was then relegated to live in squalor in an Egyptian prison. He was finally released after a forgetful butler remembered the favor that Yosef had done for him two years previously. Yosef finally achieved a responsible position. If we look back, he was destined for greatness. Nothing could have prevented that from occurring. Korach confirmed this principle when, despite his schemes, he failed to wrest the Kehunah Gedolah from Aharon.

The second lesson is that it is possible to have a good working relationship with the Gentile world. Yosef was a Hebrew slave in a land where Hebrews were despised. Yet, he became second to Pharaoh and a champion of the people. Admired and respected, he governed with dignity and worked in harmony with his Gentile peers. Those Gentiles that blatantly hate Jews are simply anti-Semites. They cannot tolerate the Jews for the most part because of unfounded jealousy or an innate insecurity that plagues so many of them. Although Antoninus of Rome was diametrically opposed philosophically to Rabbi Yehudah Ha'Nasi, they remained close friends. Those who feel they must clash with the Gentile world probably do not have the skills to get along with anyone.

The third lesson is the lesson of peace. Brothers must maintain peaceful co-existence, regardless of their differences. Vengeance and hatred must be put aside for love and forgiveness. Brothers must live together in harmony. Originally, Yosef and his brothers had far from an amicable relationship. The course of events led up to the point when their relationship reached its zenith--they made peace with one another. All nations of the world descend from Noach. One day the world will again be united in peace and harmony. We wait for that glorious day when Yosef's third treasure will be revealed.

As for the nation, he settled it by cities, from one end of Egypt's borders to another. (47:21)

Rashi explains that Yosef moved the Egyptians from city to city for a specific purpose. He was concerned that when his family emigrated to Egypt, they would be made to feel as strangers, embarrassed and rejected by Egyptian society. By moving around the Egyptians, he circumvented this problem, since the Egyptians themselves were no longer considered the "natives." The author of Va'yevch Yosef notes Yosef's remarkable mesiras nefesh, devotion and self-sacrifice, just to prevent his brothers from being humiliated. His concern for their emotional needs was incredible. He was prepared to move around an entire country, completely disrupt their lives, so that his brothers would not feel ill at ease.

A number of other instances demonstrate Yosef's extraordinary solicitude for his brothers' emotional well-being. When Yosef revealed his true identity to his brothers, he insisted that no

Egyptian be present, so that his brothers' shame would not be public. He risked his life in doing so, because without the protection of the many Egyptians in the royal palace, his brothers could have easily overwhelmed him. Yet, he took the risk. Better he should be killed than to humiliate his brothers.

Chazal tell us that during the seventeen years that Yaakov lived in Egypt, Yosef never once came to visit his father. Never was he alone in a situation in which they could talk about the past. Yosef was afraid that his father might question him regarding his whereabouts during the period of time preceding his ascension to the position of viceroy over Egypt. He knew that if his father would have asked, he would have been compelled to relate the entire tragic story of his brothers selling him. Rather than cause his brothers embarrassment, he was content not to see his father, from whom he had already been separated for so long. Can we imagine such devotion to his brothers' feelings? Yosef must have been heart-broken not to be able to spend time with his aged father. He certainly was aware that it was either now or never. Yet, he refrained, due to his unique sensitivity for his brothers.

Furthermore, Chazal tell us that Yaakov did not kiss Yosef. He suspected that because Yosef had been in Egypt for all of these years, his handsome son must have surely succumbed to the many advances of the pagan Egyptian women. Yosef, the tzaddik, the standard by whom our moral parameter is measured, withstood temptation and did not fall into the grasp of their blandishments. How he must have wanted to tell his father--I am innocent! I did not sin! Please kiss me as a father kisses his son! Being alone with his father, however, would also have entailed reviewing the past. The brothers' tragic mistake would have been revealed and their shame exposed. No! Yosef would suffer, he would live under suspicion, he would risk his life, but he would not shame his brothers. We have one more insight into the life and character of a true tzaddik.